YOGA VASISHTA

in English by Dr. Ramesam Vemuri

Based on the original book in Telugu by

BRAHMASRI KUPPA VENKATA KRISHNA MURTY

BOOK 5

UPASAMA PRAKARANA

THE CALM DOWN

Revised edition 2025

YOGA VASISHTA

BOOK 5

UPASAMA PRAKARANA

THE CALM DOWN

About the Book

Yoga Vasishta is a treasure house of ancient Indian philosophical wisdom. It offers logical and practical answers to questions like: What is Mind? What is the world? What is the purpose of existence? What is Brahman?
It is a poetic classic by the Sage Valmiki explaining the nature of The Supreme Self expounded in his own inimitable and graceful way as a Discourse between
Maharshi Vasishta and Lord Sri Rama.
The present volume, "Yoga Vasishta"– Book 5 - Upasama Prakarana - 'The Calm Down' is based on a presentation in Telugu by

Brahmasri Kuppa Venkata Krishna Murty
Vidyadhikari and Editor, Bhaktimala, Sri Ganapathi Sachchidananda Ashram, Mysore, India

and forms a part of his lectures on "Yoga Vasishta" telecast in Telugu by Gemini TV, Hyderabad, Telangana State, India.

This volume is a rendering of the same into English by

Dr. Ramesam Vemuri,
Former Adviser, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, New Delhi, India.

In it:
The 5000 stanzas of the fifth chapter on 'The Calm Down'
(Upasama Prakarana)
have been ably condensed and lucidly explained in simple words.

Illusory differentiating perceptions of life subside by carefully listening to this prakarana . The entire world will look like a water color painting washed away in rain when the true knowledge dawns. A sincere seeker who ingests and ponders deeply over the contents of this chapter will understand that the reality of the world is as sound as a horn of a hare i.e., non-existent.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS..... 2
AUTHOR'S SUBMISSION..... 3
1. Background..... 8
2. Valmiki's Narrative Skills..... 9
3. What Originates and Grows is merely the Mind..... 12
4. Know that You are not the 'Doer'..... 15
5. The Song of Saints (Siddha Gita)..... 16
6. Janaka's Contemplation..... 23
7. Giving up Desires – Contemplation-based and Wisdom based Approaches..... 26
8. The story of Punya and Pāvana (A Discussion on Relationships)..... 29
9. The story of Emperor Bali..... 34
10. Discussion on Consciousness..... 38
11. The story of Prahlada..... 43
12. The Course of Liberation And Need for Demons..... 47
13. Residual Impressions of jīvanmuktas..... 51
14. The story of Sage Gādhi..... 54
15. A Disrupted Dream..... 57
16. Dream Proved to be True..... 59
17. Which Part was Reality and Which Part was Fancy ?..... 61
18. Was not my Dream Exclusively Mine ?..... 65
19. Was it a Dream or Magic ?..... 69
20. Gādhi's Story Revisited..... 72
21. Control of Mind is True Meditation..... 78
22. Story of Uddālaka..... 80
23. The Yoga of Aum..... 82
24. The State of "Common Beingness"..... 85
25. Meditation-centered and Transaction-centered Knowledge..... 88
26. Black Pepper Seed..... 91
27. Story of Suraghu..... 93
28. Could Knowledge be Permanent ?..... 95
29. Story of Bhāsa and Vilāsa..... 97
30. Attachment Within..... 97
31. Various Names of Mind..... 99
32. Ending Mind through Yoga..... 103
33. Ending Mind through Knowledge..... 105
34. Similarity of Time and Space..... 106
35. A Dream within a Dream – Fancy within a Fancy..... 110
36. Ending Mind with and without Retention of Form..... 113
37. Seeds of the Tree of Phantasmagoria..... 114
38. Getting Rid of the Seed of Phantasmagoria..... 118
39. Brief Review of The Chapter: The Calm Down (Upasama)..... 122
40. WORD GLOSSARY..... 126

YOGA VASISHTA
Book 5
UPASAMA PRAKARANA
THE CALM DOWN

AUTHOR'S SUBMISSION

Why does an author keep the core message of his writing hidden deep inside his heart ?

He does so with the hope that the teaching would shine with double the vigor when a reader finally finds it. Because of that reason, he doesn't seal it securely in an iron vault; he only tucks it behind the tender petals of a colorful flower. His wish is that his heart should be accessible– but only to those readers who make a little effort to unravel it. Thus goes the thinking of great writers and poets; and in there lies the inner meaning of their poetic works.

The Celebrated Poet Kalidasa described the Sage Valmiki as the greatest of the spiritual guides. These words are very apt with respect to Yoga Vasishta. The poetic skills of any author may sparkle all by themselves when telling the story of a noble warrior and King like Shri Rama, or in narrating the end of the demon, Ravana. But writing a tome on the theme of a bone dry and abstruse subject like Vedanta with lyrical beauty, extending the text to 32,000 verses without losing the gravity in the discussions or the detail in narration in a gripping manner till the very end bespeaks of the immense capability of the Sage Valmiki. No other writer has attained such levels of excellence to date.

I consider myself blessed. Thanks to the benevolence and grace showered on me by my Gurus, Swami Janardanananda Saraswati and Swami Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda, I could fathom without much of an effort on my part, the depths of Sage Valmiki's heart and his teaching contained in Yoga Vasishta. With the purpose of sharing my understanding with all my fellow-seekers, I began a series of discourses on Yoga Vasishta on Gemini TV.

Inspired by the words of my teachers, I was tempted to investigate the inner meaning of Sage Valmiki's teaching. I was aided in my search by the redoubtable Saint Shri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswati Swami. His voluminous commentary on Yoga Vasishta under the title "tātparyaprakāśa vyākhya" repeatedly helped me in capturing the heights of knowledge disseminated in the text. This gave me the courage to gain the fruits of studying Yoga Vasishta.

Let me first introduce the venerable text Yoga Vasishta.

About Yoga Vasishta:

1. **Author**: Sage Valmiki
2. **Period of writing**: Some time after the completion of his earlier book, Ramayana.
3. **Alternate names** by which this book is known: jnānavāśiṣṭha, vāśiṣṭharāmāyaṇa, ūttara rāmāyaṇa, mahārāmāyaṇa, vāśiṣṭha etc. etc.

4. **Size of the text**: The original text of the *Yoga Vasishta* is traditionally said to comprise 32,000 verses. However, some scholars opine that the actual count may be less than 30,000 (based on the Nirnaya Sagar 1937 Edition). It should be noted that quantifying a work of such a magnitude and intricacy is a complex task. Ultimately, an overly critical investigation into the exact verse count offers little value to the reader in terms of absorbing the text's spiritual message.
5. **Subject matter**: Inquiry into the Supreme Self. It comprises the teaching given to the 12 year old prince Rama by the Sages Vishwamitra and Vasishta. The book establishes that the man enlightened by the wisdom of knowing the highest truth will be able to function with excellence in this world.
6. **The style of Narration and other specialtie**s:

- The gist of each topic to be discussed is summarized upfront.
- The subject is illustrated through a captivating story.
- The symbolical significance of the characters used in the stories is explained by the author himself.
- The object of the text is not about the denying or contradicting any other theories.
- There are no polemic debates.
- The author raises a number of questions from various angles and answers them himself.
- Though the subject matter is that of tough Vedanta, one can see the poetic skills of the author at innumerable instances.
- The text is full of unimaginable metaphors that capture the reader's heart.
- The dominant Sanskrit meter used in this composition is *Anustup Chandas*, a rhythmic structure traditionally employed in spiritual texts. According to the rules of this meter, each *sloka* consists of 32 syllables. In this context, it is interesting to consider the mystery and significance of the number 32 in Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy. The number 32 represents completeness, a set of significant spiritual principles, or a state of divine order and balance. While the *Anustup* meter prevails, Sage Valmiki also employs other meters to suit specific contextual nuances within the work.

7. **Abridged Versions:**

- As the text is quite voluminous, many condensed versions of the book have been prepared both in the Northern and Southern parts of India. Some of the more popular versions are:
- The text by the Kashmiri Pundit Abhinandana comprising 6,000 verses.
- The text by Shri Swami Vidya Prakasananda Giri, Head of the Shukabrahma Ashram, Kalahasti having 8,000 verses.

8. **Translations:** Translations of the text are available in almost all languages. There are six translations in Telugu language itself -- five in prose form and one as verses. I consulted all these books in my work and I am indebted to those authors. Out of these, the translation by Shri M. Subbaraya Sharma was particularly helpful to me.
9. **Expert views:** Yoga Vasishta is highly revered not only during the old historical times, but also in modern days by the spiritual teachers.

For example:

- Swami Ramatirtha described Yoga Vasishta as the "most wonderful" text.
- The book is highly revered by the Malayala Swami, The Head of the Erpedu Vyasa Ashram.
- Yoga Vasishta is acclaimed as the foremost amongst the books on Advaita by the Head of Gayatri Peetha.

10. Structure of Yoga Vasishta:

There are six chapters in the text.

- *Vairāgyaprakaraṇa* -- On Detachment -- 1,500 verses -This first chapter describes in detail the feelings of detachment experienced by Shri Rama.
- *Mumukśu Vyavahāra Prakaraṇa* – On the Conduct of a spiritual Aspirant -- 1,000 verses. This second chapter gives the details of the basic qualities to be attained by a spiritual aspirant. The importance of human effort in achieving liberation is discussed and it has been established that it is necessary that an effort should be made to obtain liberation.
- *Utpattiprakaraṇa* – On Origination -- 7,000 verses –This third chapter examines the reality of the visible world and if it has been created at all.
- *Sthitiprakaraṇa* – On Sustenance -- 3,000 verses – This fourth chapter investigates how the apparent world is sustained.
- *Upaśamaprakaraṇa* – On the Calm Down -- 5,000 verses - This fifth chapter talks of the method of obtaining a tranquil mind through True Knowledge.
- *Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa* – On Liberation -- 14,500 verses –This sixth and the final chapter is the largest wherein the achievement of Liberation is discussed thoroughly. It is divided into two parts - *Pūrvārdha and Uttarārdha*.

11. **Commentaries:** It is said that there are many commentaries in Sanskrit on YogaVasishta. However, only "tātparyaprakāśikā" by Swami Ananda Bhodhendra Saraswati is available in print. It was published by the NirnayaSagar Press in 1937. This commentary has received accolades from many learned pundits.

About Author Valmiki: It is opined by some experts that the author Valmiki of Yoga Vasishta was different from the author Valmiki of Ramayana. One group of such people belong to those that are opposed to Non-dualist philosophy. Their main concern is only to deprecate the importance of Yoga Vasishta as it is an unrivalled text on Non-duality. The other group contends that an evaluation on the authorship is called for using modern techniques rather than going by the word of tradition. Let us examine critically the various arguments advanced by this group.

The writing style of both Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta is about the same. In fact, no critic has been able to point out any major differences. However, some of these critics ask why there is not even a hint made about Yoga Vasishta in Ramayana. The answer to this question is available right in the first chapter of Yoga Vasishta. One may take a look.

The second argument is that because we find reference to Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna, Arjuna, Sage Suka and others in Yoga Vasishta, it should belong to a period later than that of Bhagavad-Gita. But if we keep in mind the caliber and skill of a writer who could handle a complex and intricate subject as Advaita Vednata with such a dexterity as found in the book, it is unlikely that we will be persuaded to conclude that such an enlightened and exceptionally competent author belonging to a later period would have tried to create a false impression about the date of his work. Hence, it is untenable to argue that it belongs to the post-Bhagavad-Gita period.

A question may, however, arise about the reference to the events of later eons (*yuga*) in the text. But inclusion of a reference to the events that are likely to take place at a future date is quite typical of the Sage Valmiki. He did so in his other and more popular work, Ramayana too. In fact, in the Balakanda of Ramayana, his narration cuts across past, present and future times in the description of different events. Sage Valmiki resorts to this type of narrating the future in uttarakanda of Ramayana also. Thus the narration of future events as seen by him through clairvoyance is a characteristic of the Sage Valmiki. It is no wonder that we find examples of such descriptions of future events in Yoga Vasishta also. In fact, whenever a future event is described, the author raises a question through one of the characters in the book about the chronological inconsistency and a suitable reply is given right there. Readers familiar with the works of other great Seers and Sages do not find this style of writing odd at all. For example, we find future events being narrated at a current time in Agastya Samhita. Sage Vyasa authored an entire purana which describes the future events only.

Thus when viewed with an unbiased eye, it is inevitable to conclude that the author of Yoga Vasishta and Ramayana was one and the same poet.

Further, we have to note that the Sage Valmiki was not only a writer *par excellence*, but also a great Maharishi. The word 'Rishi' in Sanskrit means the one who realized the ultimate Truth (*tatva*). A true writer is one who can speak accurately. Because he has both these qualities, he could write with such a depth of understanding and beauty. We notice several instances of this signature style of the Sage in both Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta.

I studied and tried to decipher the core message of Yoga Vasishta and the commentaries on it with the same spirit. I took help from elders, prayed to my teachers, and also consulted the teachings of Shri Janardanananda Swami who was not only a noble saint but also happened to be my father before his renunciation of the world. What I could understand is presented by me in my discourses that were telecast by the Gemini TV and the same is now offered in the form of a text. That is the reason it is called as the 'heart' of Yoga Vasishta.

We find a variation in spelling of the name of the Sage Vasishta. It is written in the Devanagari script both as Vaśiṣṭha and Vasiṣṭha. Both ways are correct as the former spelling is derived to mean as the one who conquered his senses and the latter one means the one who excelled as a householder.

Sage Vasishta himself clarified that writing his name either way was acceptable as quoted in a verse in Mahabharata (Canto 13, Chapter 63, verse 96). I adopted 'Vaśiṣṭha' in my writings as it would emphasize the importance of control, over the senses which is an important requisite in the study of Vedanta.

Acknowledgements:

All words are inadequate to express my indebtedness to my Teacher, Swami Ganapati Sachchidnananda. Therefore, I dedicate this work to him. I am also grateful to Gemini TV for telecasting my discourses. I tried to present the teaching contained in Yoga Vasishta in a logical manner and with a modern idiom. Please condone any omissions or commissions. However, my request to the readers is that this presentation should not be treated to be a condensation or abridgement of the original text. It is an effort to capture the "core" message and please study it in that spirit.

I am only nominally there in delivering this message. The inner sentient principle that motivates, acts and speaks is different. I pray to my Gurus to channel the Grace of that inexplicable principle to all in experientially realizing It.

Salutations to the Gurus.

Kuppa Venkata Krishna Murthy

1. Background

We had seen in Books 3 and 4 of our Series on Yoga Vasishta (Utpatti and Sthiti Prakaranas) that the venerated Vedic dictum:

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति ।

yatovā imani bhutani jāyante yena jātāni jeevanti

ṭaittiriya ūpaniśad

was the fundamental principle based on which Sage Vasishta designed the course of his talks in imparting philosophical wisdom to Lord Rama.

After an opening discussion in Books 1 and 2 of this Series on Yoga Vasishta (Vairagya and Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakaranas) as an introduction to the subjects of detachment and intense longing for liberation, the sage dealt with Origination (*Utpatti*) of the visible universe (*jagat*) and later its Sustenance (*Sthiti*) in accordance with the above scriptural statement (Books 3 and 4 of this series on Yoga Vasishta). In the chapter on Creation (Book 3 in this Series) it was maintained that the origination of the universe was purely incidental to the mind of the onlooker. In the chapter on Sustenance (Book 4 in this Series) it was established that the universe draws its sustenance also from mind. Now it remains to be shown that the calming down and dissolution of the universe too is dependent on the mind of the seer.

But could the dissolution, i.e. ending of the universe, depend on the mind ? If mind at all exists, the universe inevitably follows it one way or another - either by origination or by sustenance. So there is no possibility of the universe being annulled by the mind if the mind manages to continue its existence. For this reason it was repeatedly pointed out in the earlier chapters (refer to Books 3 and 4 of Yoga Vasishta) that the universe would end only when the mind ended and there was no other way to dissolve the universe. Sage Vasishta, hence, counseled Lord Rama to make the best of effort to eradicate the mind. After delivering such a sermon, there hardly remains anything further to be added. Therefore, Sage Vasishta did not want to talk any more about ending the world. Instead he planned to discuss the ways and means of annihilating the mind.

As a matter of fact, Vasishta did not prefer the word 'annihilation'. Instead he talked of "Calming down" the mind. "Calming down" here implies quietening. It is like containing fire. Like extinguishing flames. An ember may burn for sometime; but subsequently the fire dies out. The shape of the original piece of wood or coal from which the ember had come, remains even after the fire gets extinguished.

Similarly when once the mind is dissolved, the world (*Jagat* = universe) also gets extinguished though remaining in form like a burnt out ember. The world gets contained. It is subjugated, quietened. It is dissolved.

Accordingly, the subject matter Sage Vasishta tackles in the Upasama Prakarana (Yoga Vasishta - Book 5 - Upasama Prakarana -The Calm Down) concerns questions like: What are the ways and means of dissolving the mind ? What methods can be adopted to achieve a quiet mind ? Which processes help in calming down the mind ?

Sage Vasishta from this Chapter onwards turns his attention to a discussion on the applied aspects – developing methods of practice from the theory so far spoken about. Aspirants of liberation, therefore, hold this Chapter of 5000 slokas (verses) in very high esteem. It is considered as an invaluable source of techniques for practical observance (saadhana).

2. Valmiki's Narrative Skills

Sage Valmiki, the author of Yoga Vasishta, was a great poet and a skillful storyteller. He uses his own inimitable style of lyrical elegance in depicting the shift of gear adopted by Sage Vasishta in order to steer the discussions towards the practical side.

Sage Valmiki writes : Sage Vasishta's teaching continued for a period of ten days with two sessions a day – one in the morning and another in the afternoon. On the eleventh day, however, Vasishta ended the day's discourse by noon. He said that they should meet again the next day.

Uncharacteristically deviating from the main story at this point, Sage Valmiki, for the first time in Yoga Vasishta, resorts to a detailed presentation on the daily ritualistic acts of ablutions observed by Sage Vasishta. He also depicts the routine followed by the Royalty of the time in general and that of Rama and his brothers in particular. The minute-by-minute activities on that specific afternoon were spelt out meticulously. (This digression on daily rituals has a significant message for spiritual aspirants, as we shall see shortly.)

Though Rama had gone through his daily chores as usual, his mind was totally occupied with Sage Vasishta's teachings. In fact his mind was so infatuated with these thoughts that its state could be compared to that of a youthful elephant in heat:

करिणीं कलभो यथा *kariṇīṃ kalabho yathā*

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 2, Sloka 13

It is quite appropriate to take the word **कलभ** "*Kalabha*" here to mean an adolescent he elephant. It is well known that he-elephants in heat chase the female elephants with unswerving focus. Rama too was ruminating on every word of Vasishta in a similar way with single-minded attention.

As the night progressed, all his brothers fell asleep. But Rama was unable to get even a wink. He sat up on the bed. He recalled each word spoken by Sage Vasishta sequentially from day one. He reviewed and examined every statement incisively. Not stopping at that, he analyzed the truth behind each of the statements in his own way. Commendable indeed was the one-pointed attention of the Lad, Rama!

किमिदं नाम संसारभ्रमणं किमिमे जनाः ।
भूतानि च विचित्राणि किमायान्ति प्रयान्ति किं ।।

kimidaṃ nāma saṃsārabhramaṇaṃ kimime janāḥ |
bhūtāni ca vicitrāṇi kimāyānti prayānti kiṃ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 2, Sloka 14

"What is this world ? What are all these people? What are the elements (*Pancha bhutās)* that constitute the world ? Where do they come from ? How do they form ? Where do they go and how?"

Rama mused over Sage Vasishta's teachings again and again, recollecting each section and each chapter.

Soon it was dawn. The Royal bands began playing auspicious tunes of wake up calls. As Rama was already awake, he proceeded straight to complete his morning ablutions after a bath. His brothers followed him. All of them went to Sage Vasishta's hermitage. They found Vasishta in deep meditation. So Rama and his brothers waited for Vasishta to conclude the latter's meditation.

It was a full morning by then. Several nobles, princes, saints, and many others also reached Vasishta's abode. Vasishta got up after a while and greeted everybody. Thereafter, he went to King Dasaratha's (Rama's father) court by a chariot along with Sage Viswamitra who was also camping at Vasishta's hermitage. Sri Rama and his retinue walked in front of the chariot paying their respect to Vasishta and welcoming him to the Royal court.

All persons took up their respective positions in Dasaratha's court. King Dasaratha enquired about the welfare of Sage Vasishta. He praised Vasishta on the excellent education being imparted by him to Rama and others. He then asked Rama to get his doubts, if any, cleared.

As we already said, there was a good reason for Sage Valmiki to describe elaborately the daily routine and rituals as well as the churnings going on in Rama's mind while penning the eleventh day discourse. Valmiki is indirectly conveying that whatever may be the state of spiritual attainment of a person, whatever may be the level of philosophical knowledge, he should not forsake the daily routine sanctioned and prescribed by Vedas. We can infer this from the description of the schedule followed by Vasishta. Rama's observance of prescribed ablutions, in spite of himself being firmly absorbed in Self-inquiry, indicates to us that all aspirants, irrespective of their state of renunciation and intensity of Self-inquiry, necessarily have to fulfill their daily obligations.

Next comes the question as to why Vasishta discontinued the lessons on the afternoon of the eleventh day. This intermission was introduced with a purpose. It was to emphasize the fact that it would not suffice to merely audition a course in philosophy continuously by an aspirant. The aspirant had to digest what was taught, mull it over and thoroughly understand what was taught leaving no scope for even an iota of doubt. Every teacher should adopt this method of providing a break, as was done by Vasishta, so that the student has time for reflection and self-review. Teaching should be resumed only after such breaks.

This interpretation is not a guess or an assumption on our part. Vasishta implied as much. When King Dasaratha (Rama's father) encouraged Rama to come up with well thought out questions for clarity on what was so far taught to him, Vasishta did not let Rama speak. Instead he posed some questions to Rama.

कच्चित्स्मरसि वाक्यार्थं पूर्वापरविचारितम् ।।
कच्चित्स्मरसि सर्वासां विभागमरिमर्दन ।।
वाक्यार्थश्चाखिलः कच्चित्त्वया राम विचारितः
ह्यस्तनस्य विचारस्य रात्रौ हृदि निवेशितः ।।

kaccitsmarasi vākyārthaṃ pūrvāparavicāritam ||
kaccitsmarasi sarvāsāṃ vibhāgamarimardana ||
vākyārthaścākhilaḥ kaccittvayā rāma vicāritaḥ
hyastanasya vicārasya rātrau hṛdi niveśitaḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 4, Slokas 15 - 21

"Rama! Did you recall what was taught by me and mentally revise it ? Did you review the number of ways I classified the subject matter ? Did you fully examine the meaning of my words ? Please appreciate that anything taught will be effective only if one repeatedly mulls over it in one's own mind!"

Not stopping at that, Vasishta summarized what had been taught thus far and asked Rama if the latter could remember everything.

The purpose of providing half-day break in his tutoring can be inferred from the following questions posed by Vasishta:

Vasishta:

ह्यस्तनस्य विचारस्य रात्रौ हृदि निवेशितः

hyastanasya vicārasya rātrau hṛdi niveśitaḥ

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 4, Sloka 21

"Did you review the day's lessons each night ? Do you remember every topic ?"

Rama's reply was fittingly appropriate.

Rama:

अपास्तनिद्रेण मया वाक्यार्थो हृदि चिन्तितः

apāstanidreṇa mayā vākyārtho hṛdi cintitaḥ

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 4, Sloka 26

"I thought over the issues throughout the night without resting even for a moment."

3. What Originates and Grows is merely the Mind

As Rama did not have any clarifications to be sought in what was imparted thus far, he did not raise any questions. So, Vasishta continued with his discourse.

Vasishta: "Please listen to me carefully as I shall now teach you the most supreme of all topics — ways to calm down the mind. Just like pillars bear the weight of a building, *rājasic and tāmasic* people carry on their shoulders the unlimited illusion of a world. But *Satvic* natured persons like you can leave this burden as easily as a snake sheds its skin. The only way to do it is through an understanding of the essence of Truth (*tatva vicārana*).

"Whatever is not existent at the beginning and also at the end, but appears only in between cannot be Real. Whatever stays permanently at all times (past, present and future) only can be True. How does a thing that has no existence at the beginning and at the end appear to be born and to exist in-between ? The fact of the matter is neither anything is born nor anything has grown. All of this is entirely a play of the mind!"

जायते मन एवेह मन एव विवर्धते ।
सम्यग्दर्शनदृष्ट्या तु मन एव हि मुच्यते ।।

jāyate mana eveha mana eva vivardhate |
samyagdarśanadṛṣṭyā tu mana eva hi mucyate ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 5, Sloka 11

"What is born here is the mind, what develops is also the mind. If you consider it properly, what is liberated also is the mind!"

Rama: "You said so very clearly earlier too. It is for sure that the one who is bewitched by the illusory world is mind; what ages and dies too is mind. Certainly I could understand that. Revered Teacher! Please show the way to transcend the mind."

Vasishta: "Listen then, Rama. There are seven steps to achieve this. They are:

1. Study scriptures from the very beginning.
2. Keep company of noble persons (*sajjana sāngatya*) and draw the benefits of the Four fold Accomplishments (*sādhana catuśtaya sampatti*).

3. Purify the mind or in other words cultivate complete renunciation.
4. Take refuge under a learned teacher giving up any egoistic feelings.
5. If the teacher recommends worshipping a deity with attributes (*saguna*), follow his advice and pray to that deity observing all the prescribed rituals. Thus obtain the blessings of the deity.
6. Proceed then with an enquiry into the Truth of "Self".
7. Only after that an individual will be able to realize the Supreme Self hidden minutely within one's own self like the way a prospector recognizes a particle of gold in (a heap of) muck."

"If one goes along these steps sequentially, it becomes clear that the Supreme Self is different from the embodied worldly living-being. A leaf may exist in water or water may fall on a lotus leaf; but neither one sticks to the other. Similarly the Supreme Self does not get affected by either worldliness (*samsāratva*) or by being an individual self (*jīvatva*). The world and the Supreme Self are totally irreconcilable. Even then, there is an impression created as if the perfect Self is embodied and is immersed within the affairs of the world. The reason for this is mind. I have been saying this many times and to many people."

पृथगात्मा पृथग्देही जलपद्मलवोपमौ ।
ऊर्ध्वबाहुर्विरौम्येष न च कश्चिच्छृणोति मे ।।

pṛthagātmā pṛthagdehī jalapadmalavopamau |
ūrdhvabāhurviraumyeṣa na ca kaścicchṛṇoti me ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 5, Sloka 26

"I holler from roof tops (*lit*. shout with hands thrown up in the air). But nobody cares." (This sentence is usually ascribed to Sage Vyasa. It appears here in Yoga Vasishta also. Maybe it proves that all great minds speak alike !)

Vasishta: "Rama! People think that they experience sorrow and happiness in the world. In reality for whom is this sorrow or happiness? Is it for the inert body or for the Supreme Self that transcends everything ? It is not possible for sorrow and happiness to impact the inert body. There is no question of sorrow or happiness affecting Self which transcends them. Obviously then, nobody has happiness or sorrow!"

"Everything in this world is imbued with the Supreme Self. The Supreme Self is infinite. It is ever tranquil. Hold on firmly to this view."

"I talked sometime ago about "Creation and Visualization (*sriśti – driśti*)." I said to you that the entire 'visible world' (i.e. 'creation'), was nothing but 'visualization'.

Nothing was really created. The visible world (visualization of the creation) is no more than ripples in a pond. Or specks of light that appear to a giddy person.

"Rama! Do not worry whether the visible world and Reality (Brahman) are one and the same or two different things. Answering either way would be wrong because the world you see is an apparition. Suppose you see a snake at dusk. You find out later under good light that it was actually a rope. The snake is not there any more. Now would you say that the snake and rope are one or two different things ?

One may argue that they are different because the rope was not seen as such and a snake had been seen. Another may dissent saying that they should be considered as one because a snake, distinctly separate from the rope, could not be found again. But in fact both arguments are visualization-based (*drishti vāda*) !

"Strictly speaking, the rope and the snake are not one; nor are they two (different things). In a similar vein, *Brahman* and *jagat* are not one or two. That is the reason why Vedas declare, '**सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म**' '*sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma'* (Everything here is Brahman), '**आत्मैवेदं सर्वं**' '*ātmaivedaṃ sarvaṃ'* (All this here is Self only), '**ब्रह्मैवेदं सर्वं**' '*brahmaivedaṃ sarvaṃ* ' (Everything here is Brahman only) and many equivalent statements.

"Therefore, Rama, let go of the false impressions like "I am different (from that) – that is different (from me)." Go beyond dualities. Stay forever in *sātvic quality* (*satva guna*). Do not go after acquiring and saving things. Do not allow sorrow to affect you. Be calm and serene and live in aloneness. Subjugate your thought processes.

"Rama, accept things as they come. Do not regret experiencing things. Don't wish for anything. Do not exert yourself to procure anything. Do not fantasize. Do not invite nor reject anything.

"If you follow the above, Rama, you will attain the Supreme state transcending the world. By this way you will not be deluded even if you are involved with the world."

एकातपत्रमवनौ गुरुणोपदिष्टं
सम्यक्सुपालय चिरं समयेह दृष्ट्या ।
राज्यं समस्तगुणरञ्जितराजलोक-
स्त्वाशो न युक्तइह कर्मसु नापि रागः ।।

ekātapatramavanau guruṇopadiṣṭaṃ
samyaksupālaya ciraṃ samayeha dṛṣṭyā |
rājyaṃ samastaguṇarañjitarājaloka-
stvāśo na yuktaiha karmasu nāpi rāgaḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 5, Sloka 54

"Rama! If your father crowns you, take over the reins of the kingdom and rule well with equipoise. Inspire other kings with your exemplary deeds. Having secured this life as a result of the past deeds, it does not befit a wise person who knows the truth to refuse what is obtained or long for something that is not acquired."

This is a new punch Sage Vasishta gives to his teachings at the end of the Fifth Sarga. The next Sarga opens with a justification for what has been said.

4. Know that You are not the 'Doer'

Vasishta: Rama !

इमं विश्वपरिस्पन्दं करोमीत्यस्तवासनम् ।
प्रवर्तते यः कार्येषु स मुक्त इति मे मतिः ।।

imaṃ viśvaparispandaṃ karomītyastavāsanam |
pravartate yaḥ kāryeṣu sa mukta iti me matiḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 6, Sloka 1

"What is action or work done? Work done is displacement. I stated this in the very first chapter. I talked about three types of displacements or movements. They are:

संवित स्पन्द	*saṃvit spanda*	–	Movement of Knowledge
मानस स्पन्द	*mānasa spanda*	–	Movement of Mind
इन्द्रिय स्पन्द	*indriya spanda*	–	Movement of Organs

"These three joined together to become the world. Ignorant persons presumptuously claim "doership" (ownership of action) for certain of the movements (actions or works done) in this world. Impressions (*vāsanās*) of the past births are the reason for such a presumption. Suppose a person rids himself of all the past impressions. Would he still be involved in actions ? Surely he would be. But he has no claim of doership for the actions. He feels that actions just go on like iron filings moving towards a magnet.

"In my opinion, whoever thus lives in this world free of past impressions and without a claim of doership is a liberated person.

"Hence, Rama, perform all actions with no claim for 'doership'. An ignoramus (*tamasic* individual) performs actions with a desire for or against something. Therefore he swings between heaven and hell. On the contrary, the pure and pious (*sātvic* individuals) perform actions after a deep philosophical analysis freeing themselves from bondage of desires. They achieve "*niśkevalam padam*" – liberation (Sarga 6; Sloka 5)."
(We may note here that Sage Valmiki used the word *niśkevalam* instead of *kaivalyam* (absolute Oneness). *Niśkevalam padam* means *nitaram kevalam padam* i.e. absolute aloneness).

Vasishta: "*rajasic* and *sātvic* individuals may in early stages go through a few ordinary births. They steadily improve their *sātvic* quality and attain liberation. That is the way things move normally. Sometimes there could be exceptions. An individual, because of his good deeds in past births, may suddenly obtain Supreme Knowledge. It just happens like a bolt from the blue even in the absence of a Guru. It could be associated with an extraordinary event. I shall tell you a true story in order to illustrate this."

5. The Song of Saints (Siddha Gita)

"King Janaka ruled a country called Videha. He was well known as a noble king. He went for a stroll in the nearby Himalaya Mountains on a morning during spring season. He was wandering around the hills and valleys when he heard some melodious songs. A few saints sitting in a grove were singing in captivating tunes. He placed himself behind a tree and listened intently to their songs. The lyrics were somewhat as follows:

First Song:

द्रष्टुदृश्यसमायोगात्प्रत्ययानन्दनिश्चयः ।
यस्तं स्वमात्मतत्त्वोत्थं निःस्पन्दं समुपास्महे ॥

draṣṭudṛśyasamāyogātpratyayānandaniścayaḥ |
yastaṃ svamātmatattvotthaṃ niḥspandaṃ samupāsmahe ||

Siddha Gita - Sloka 9

"Senses, (eyes, ears and so on), and the worldly objects conjoined together kindle processes which produce blissful flashes of awareness. That (Awareness) in truth is Self if probed in depth."

"**Explanation of the Song:** "Suppose you see a beautiful flower. You experience happiness. What exactly is happening here? A contact is established between your eye and the flower. That stimulates your cognitive processes. A response wave is generated in your mind. Pleasure is experienced as a result. Where did the pleasure come from? It had not come from anywhere outside. It is there everywhere! Under ordinary circumstances, it is concealed because of illusion. It is covered up by a veil. In the instant example, a mental process caused by a flower partially and temporarily lifted the veil. A streak of glee flashed across as a result of this uncovering. But the individual does not realize that the ecstasy experienced is part of the infinite Supreme Consciousness present everywhere. He thinks that the blissful pleasure has come from the beautiful flower. Therefore, the veil comes back and obscures the all-pervading joy. A person, who understands this process, realizes infinite pleasure in every sensory experience, irrespective of the specific sensory faculty through which it is perceived. He disregards the object and immerses himself in the Supreme Bliss. He sees only the rapturous Supreme Self in every object of the world. And that is the way we contemplate upon. Thus is the notion conveyed by this song of the holy saints."

Second Song:

द्रष्टृदर्शनदृश्यानि त्यक्त्वा वासनया सह ।
दर्शनप्रथमाभासमात्मानं समुपास्महे ।।

draṣṭṛdarśanadṛśyāni tyaktvā vāsanayā saha |
darśanaprathamābhāsamātmānaṃ samupāsmahe ||

Siddha Gita - Sloka 10

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 8, Sloka 10

(This is a highly meaningful verse. We should try understanding the wisdom behind the original Sanskrit words in order to fully appreciate the profundity of the message. Therefore, we leave this song as it is without rendering it into English lyrics.)

"**Explanation of the Song:** "Every individual who is bound is governed by triads (*triputi*). The triad of Seer-Seeing-Seen is the most common (and hence important) of all the triads. The three components of the triad in seeing the objective world are:

I am the **seer**
It is **I** performing the **act** of seeing or **I see**
All this is **seen by me**.

These are respectively referred to in Sanskrit as:
द्रष्ट - *draṣṭa* - Subject;
दर्शन - *darśana* - Predicate;
दृश्य - *ddṛśya* - Object.

"These three thoughts are fundamental to every one. Impressions (*vāsanas*) carried forward from previous births are the cause for the occurrence of the above triad (three thoughts). If one has to free oneself from the triad, impressions from past births have to cease. Is there a way to end the impressions?

"We experience several perceptions in our daily life. I see, I eat, I hear and so on are all sensory perceptions! At the head of any of these statements is "I." "I" is at the beginning of every action. If "I" is the true seer, what should "I" perceive first? "I" should see itself first as "I" is closest to itself. Every individual commits the mistake of missing to perceive "I" which is the nearest and which exists everywhere; however, he/she easily "perceives" the distant objects (objective world). Correcting this mistake, if "I" can see "I" in the very first action of seeing, the impressions of past births come to an end. What is seen first in such a process of seeing is the Supreme Self. And that is the way we contemplate upon. Thus is the concept behind this song of the holy saints."

Third Song:

द्वयोर्मध्यगतं नित्यमस्तिनास्तीति पक्षयोः ।
प्रकाशनं प्रकाश्यानामात्मानं समुपास्महे ॥

dvayormadhyagataṃ nityamastināstīti pakṣayoḥ |
prakāśanaṃ prakāśyānāmātmānaṃ samupāsmahe ||

Siddha Gita - Sloka 11

"Staying neutral betwixt disputants of the debates on whether Self 'Is' or 'Isn't,' remaining a mute witness to Being and not-being. It is but the Supreme Self that shows them both."

"**Explanation of the Song:** "There is an unending debate on whether Self exists or not. Persons holding diametrically opposing views argue on forever. One school of thought sees the Self as non-existing. Another school sees Self as existing. But "Self" itself stays neutral in the debate. It remains a mere witness of both beingness and non-beingness. It shows beingness to those who say It 'is' and shows non-beingness to those who say It 'is not'. Therefore, we contemplate on that ever-existing Supreme Self who is just a witness beyond beingness and non-beingness. Thus is the gist of this song of the holy saints."

Fourth Song:

यस्मिन्सर्वं यस्य सर्वं यतः सर्वं यस्मायिदम् ।
यस्मायिदम् येन सर्वं यद्धि सर्वं तत्सत्यं समुपास्महे ॥

yasminsarvaṃ yasya sarvaṃ yataḥ sarvaṃ yasmāyidam |
Yasmāyidam yena sarvaṃ yaddhi sarvaṃ tatsatyaṃ samupāsmahe ||

Siddha Gita - Sloka 12

"Inside what, belonging to who, because of who, for whom, by who and about what did the world form ? Self Supreme is That."

"**Explanation of the Song:** "In this song all cases (like, nominative, genitive, accusative) are used. There are seven cases in Sanskrit language and a reverse order from Seventh to the Second is followed in framing the questions and the song ends with the First Case. The questions emulate approximately the Vedic statements like:

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति । यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।

yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | *yena jātāni jīvanti* | *yatprayantyabhisaṃviśanti* |

ṭaittariyopaniśad 1-3-1

"It conveys the sense that one should meditate upon that eternal Supreme Self which precedes and follows every thing seen in the world. Thus is the view of the holy saints."

Fifth Song:

अशिरस्कं हकारान्तमशेषाकारसंस्थितम् ।
अजस्रमुच्चरन्तं स्वं तमात्मानमुपास्महे ॥

aśiraskaṃ hakārāntamaśeṣākārasaṃsthitam |
ajasramuccarantaṃ svaṃ tamātmānamupāsmahe ||

Siddha Gita - Sloka 13

" 'A' is at the head and 'Z' is at the tail-end. All other sounds (letters) are in-between. The word AZ (*Aham*) joining both ends is truly Self Supreme."

(The third song is developed based on Sanskrit language. A little acquaintance with Sanskrit is necessary to bring out the beauty in this song. The Sanskrit alphabet has 49 letters. The first letter is "*a*" (pronounced as 'u' in but, gut) and the last letter is "*h*" (pronounced as 'h' in hut, hurt). "*a*" is a vowel. "*h*" is a consonant. All possible sounds are covered by letters falling between '*a*' and '*h*' in Sanskrit language. Therefore, a word like "*aham*" in Sanskrit formed with the two end-letters ('*a*' and '*h*') symbolically includes everything in-between. "*Aham*", incidentally, means "I" in Sanskrit language).

"**Explanation of the Song:** "The Fourth song is a composition based on Sanskrit grammar. In the argot of grammar if a letter in the alphabet is joined with another in the sequence, it is implicitly taken to represent all letters falling in-between the two. Taking English as an example:

"A to D or AD stands for A, B, C and D
L to P or LP stands for L, M, N, O and P .

"In Sanskrit language this symbolic notation is used even for naming certain characteristic features of an entity. For example, taking the letters "*b*" and "*l*", the word '*bāla*' is formed to connote the group of six letters (including the four that fall in between them) in Sanskrit alphabet. These six letters constitute the seed-letters (*bīja akśara*) of *svādhistana cakra* (corresponds to Prostatic nerve plexus). Therefore, this chakra is also referred to as *bāla cakra*.

"In a similar way, joining '*a*' and '*h*' the word '*aham*' is formed. It would stand for all the 49 letters that fall in between. Letters are, after all, sounds. Accepting the concept that Sound makes up the world, we can say that the word '*aham*' would represent all sounds and hence every entity in the world. That is why every creature in the world refers to itself as '*aham*' (I), '*aham*' (I). Though '*aham*' (I) is merely a symbolic name, everyone feels it represents himself/herself/itself and no other.

"We meditate on that Supreme Self which appears as if confined inside in every one but actually present in each entity and permeates every thing. Thus is the conviction of the holy saints."

Sixth Song:

सन्त्यज्य हृद्गुहेशानं देवमन्यं प्रयान्ति ये ।
ते रत्नमभिवाञ्छन्ति त्यक्तहस्तस्थकौस्तुभाः ॥

santyajya hṛdguheśānaṃ devamanyaṃ prayānti ye |
te ratnamabhivāñchanti tyaktahastasthakaustubhāḥ ||

Siddha Gita - Sloka 14

"People, blind to the Self that dwells within their very heart, look for a god hither and thither. They are like Knights who search for a pebble ignoring the precious jewel that's already in their palm."

"**Explanation of the Song:** "Many theists believe in a God. They worship Him through elaborate rituals thinking that He resides in some symbol, — an idol, a temple, a pilgrimage center like Kasi or a Heavenly world like Vaikuntha. As a matter of fact, the Supreme God is right here in our heart.

"People do not realize the simple truth that the one who resides in one's own heart cannot be different from himself and hence he, himself, is the Supreme Self. They vainly look for gods all over. Such persons are like the fools who hunt for precious stones in a heap of pebbles neglecting the very crown jewel like Kaustubha (most valuable gem worn by Lord Vishnu) that has come to their hand. Hence, we contemplate on the Supreme Self who is right in our heart. Thus is the intention of the holy saints."

Seventh Song:

सर्वाशाः किल सन्त्यज्य फलमेतदवाप्यते ।
येनाशाविषवल्लीनां मूलमाला विलूयते ॥

sarvāśāḥ kila santyajya phalametadavāpyate |
yenāśāviṣavallīnāṃ mūlamālā vilūyate ||

Siddha Gita - Sloka 15

"When once all craving vanishes, the Supreme Self makes His sparkling presence. With the appearance of Supreme Self, every entangling creeper of desire is severed at its very root."

"**Explanation of the Song:** "This is an approximate rendition of the Upanishadic mantras (chants) like:

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥

yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śritāḥ |
atha martyo'mṛto bhavatyatra brahma samaśnute ||

kathopaniśad 2-3-14

"One becomes Supreme Brahman when one rids oneself of all desires and is free from the impressions of past births. When this experiential feeling becomes reinforced, desires get cut at their very root. Therefore, we meditate on the Supreme Self, the Absolute, that is obtained in a desire-less state. Thus is the feeling of the holy saints."

Eighth Song:

बुद्ध्वाप्यत्यन्तवैरस्यं यः पदार्थेषु दुर्मतिः ।
बध्नाति भावनां भूयो नरो नासौ स गर्दभः ॥

buddhvāpyatyantavairasyaṃ yaḥ padārtheṣu durmatiḥ |
badhnāti bhāvanāṃ bhūyo naro nāsau sa gardabhaḥ ||

Siddha Gita - Sloka 16

"If a man desires worldly objects knowing full well their hollowness, Would he be wise ? No, surely he would be an ass."

"**Explanation of the Song:** "The eighth song makes a derogatory reference to the learned people who, from a reading of scriptures and the teachings of Gurus, understand the world to be uninteresting and shallow. Such people grasp the philosophical truth merely at an intellectual level. Hence, they are unable to wriggle out of worldly attractions. By calling them "Asses", the song stresses the importance of renunciation in reaching the Supreme Self. Thus is the thinking of the holy saints. "

Ninth Song:

उत्थितानुत्थितानेतानिन्द्रियाहीन्पुनः पुनः ।
हन्याद्विवेकदण्डेन वज्रेणेव हरिर्गिरीन् ॥

utthitānutthitānetānindriyāhīnpunaḥ punaḥ |
hanyādvivekadaṇḍena vajreṇeva harirgirīn ||

Siddha Gita - Sloka 17

"Just like Indra, the Chief of Gods, battered the hills with his thunderbolt, the oft-rising snakes of senses should be whacked down in order to subjugate them, using the truncheon of discretion such that they cannot pop up any more."

"**Explanation of the Song:** "This song alludes to achieving renunciation through the technique of control of mind and sensory systems (*Sama* and *Dama* practices in Yoga). An aspirant should remind himself about the transitory nature of the worldly objects each time a 1 desire arises in him. Thus he should divert his senses from impermanent worldly attractions towards the everlasting Supreme Self. Thus is the opinion of the holy Saints."

Tenth Song:

उपशमसुखमाहरेत्पवित्रं सुशमवतः शममेति साधुचेतः ।
प्रशमितमनसः स्वके स्वरूपे भवति सुखे स्थितिरुत्तमा चिराय ॥

upaśamasukhamāharetpavitraṃ suśamavataḥ śamameti sādhucetaḥ |
praśamitamanasaḥ svake svarūpe bhavati sukhe sthitiruttamā cirāya ||

Siddha Gita - Sloka 18

"Control of mind and senses results in sacred happiness and a tranquil mind. A quietened mind is indeed the route to Blissful State Supreme."

"**Explanation of the Song:** "In this final song the holy men sum up in a nut shell the path to be followed by a spiritual aspirant. There are many methods of spiritual practice available in the world. Some of these are action-oriented sacrifices etc., worship-oriented rituals etc., and yoga -oriented techniques like chanting sacred hymns or breath control exercises. However, the best of all methods is the sama and *dama* approach – control of the mind and senses. This does not mean forceful containment of mind. A pleasure should automatically emanate from the practice of disciplining the mind and senses. Only such a *sama* and *dama* are sanctified because they yield a placid mind. A placid mind does not mean a calm mind with reduced perturbations. All thought waves have to be totally attenuated in a tranquil mind. When once the mind is thus quietened, subjugated, a supreme happiness, superior to that resulting from *sama* and *dama*, will be experienced. This ineffable bliss, the true state of the Self, will stay forever. Thus is the notion behind the tenth song of the holy saints."

"King Janaka began to cry after hearing the ten songs when once the initial pleasure of music had waned. He gathered himself however and returned home from his walk. He went to his room and sat alone in contemplation. The ten songs of the holy men continued to ring in his ears. In fact it was not the song and music but the philosophical truth behind the songs that arrested his attention. He wondered about his own spiritual status and his level of understanding. He lamented thus:

हा कष्टमतिकष्टासु लोकलोलदशास्वयम् ।
पाषाणेष्विव पाषाणा आलुठामि बलादहम् ।।

hā kaṣṭamatikaṣṭāsu lokaloladaśāsvayam |
pāṣāṇeṣviva pāṣāṇā āluṭhāmi balādaham ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 9, Sloka 5

"How sad! How sad!! So many stages have gone by in my life. Thinking of the past events, I feel like a rolling stone that has gathered no moss."

[Note: Sage Valmiki closed the 9th Sarga describing the introspective soliloquy of King Janaka in sixty verses starting with the above verse. The Sarga is sprinkled with maxims of poetic splendor that can create a lasting impression on an aspirant's mind. It provides detailed advice on the way spiritual quest has to be pursued depending on the social position of the person - a ruler, warrior or an official. The 9th Sarga is very important to spiritual seekers. We shall not, however, dwell further on this Sarga as many of the issues dealt with therein are a repetition of what had been discussed previously. We will, therefore, continue on with the main story.]

"King Janaka deliberated on the songs of the holy men again and again. Constant contemplation on the meaning of the songs not only helped him in getting rid of desires but also freed him from the impressions of past births. Consequently wisdom dawned on him. He determined that he would abide firmly within himself. Thus through a few hours of self analysis, King Janaka reached the Seventh step in the Sevenfold Yoga. He became still like a statue.

"An aged guard of the palace providentially came by the room. The serviceman was surprised to see the King sitting alone without attending to the morning routines of ablution. As he was older than the king in age, he ventured to address the king as follows:

Guard:

देव दोःस्तम्भविश्रान्तसमस्तवसुधाभर ।

deva doḥstambhaviśrāntasamastavasudhābhara |

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 10, Sloka 2

"Oh, Mighty King! You carry the burden of the whole world on your shoulders!

"Please rise up sir. Kindly prepare yourself to attend to the daily routine of royal duties. Beautiful damsels are carrying on their heads pots of water mixed with fragrant flowers, camphor and vermilion. They are like river-goddesses awaiting your arrival at the bathing halls. In case you prefer to have a bath in an enchanting lake, a pond with exquisite lotus flowers is made ready. The banks of the pond are covered with colorful picnic umbrellas. Several warriors with their chariots and horsemen are ready to serve you while you bathe.

"Learned Brahmins who have already purified themselves are waiting to assist you in the worship of God. They will recite sacred hymns as you bathe, if you so desire. There are other servants waiting to blow gentle breezes (with hand-held fans) at you if you come to the dining hall. Oh, King! Please move quickly. Great men like you do not wish to default on achieving targets on time." The guard eloquently appealed thus reminding the king of his grandeur and responsibilities."

Sage Valmiki provided here an interesting account of the habits and living conditions of the then nobility, the way they spoke, the dignified conduct of their service-men and how the rich masters responded to such entreaties and so on.

6. Janaka's Contemplation

"King Janaka heard silently what the sentry said. He neither agreed nor denied. He went back into his contemplation. He started to muse, "Ruling, Royalty and Riches! Oh !! The sentry talks so gloriously !!!

कियन्मात्रमिदं नाम राज्यं सुखमिति स्थितम् ।

kiyanmātramidaṃ nāma rājyaṃ sukhamiti sthitam |

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 10, Sloka 11

"What are these kingdoms and comforts? How long do they last? These are transitory. Should I exult at these? I had been enjoying these for so long. But what am I left with but mirages ? I should at least now wake up to reality. I will not be tempted by these illusions any more. I shall learn to stay calm and serene like the mighty ocean whose waves are subdued.

"But Oh, Mind! You are truly mischievous. You are adept at running after comforts though superficially you say no to them. At least now step back and yield. You pretend as if you are beaten. But you do not really relent. You hunger after coziness and luxury. You don't really care for either virtue or vice. You merely feign to be vigilant of good deeds or sinful acts. You may occasionally be less extravagant because of a fear of either being disgraced by the society or going to Hell. But it is not because you are truly averse to enjoyment.

"Oh, Mind! Did you ever feel gratified by the luxuries and comforts? So stop hankering after comforts. Take refuge in permanent Supreme Self."

"Musing thus, King Janaka stayed put in philosophical contemplation for some more time. The guard was baffled at the king's behavior. He did not know what to do next. But having served the nobility for long, he decided that it was best not to say anything further. He remained quiet.

"A little later King Janaka resumed deliberating within himself. His thoughts were more restrained (*sama*) this time. He reflected thus: "What should I strive in this world for? Everything is impermanent. What is there for me to seek?

"Is it not 'intention' to act that is destroying me ? Don't I yearn for 'doership'? Is it not 'doership' that is destroying me in this world ? Should I not then shun 'doership' and obtain 'non-doership'?

"If that is so, what does it mean to earn non-doership ? Who is after all the doer, the actor ? To whom does the action belong ? Action is done by the body. To whom does non action belong ? Or in other words to whom does actionlessness belong ? Even this has to belong to the body. How about me ? I am not the body. I have nothing to do with the body. How can then either doing action or non-action adhere to me ? Taking action implies 'doership'. Taking non-action means non-doership. Neither can cling to me. How could I then earn 'non-doership'?

"Therefore, I do not seek action or non-action. I want neither doership nor non doership. I am Pure Supreme Self. How can there be a downfall for me? How could there be an end for me?

नाभिवाञ्छाम्यसंप्राप्तं संप्राप्तं न त्यजाम्यहम् ।
स्वस्थ आत्मनि तिष्ठामि यन्ममास्ति तदस्तु मे ।।

nābhivāñchāmyasaṃprāptaṃ saṃprāptaṃ na tyajāmyaham |
svastha ātmani tiṣṭhāmi yanmamāsti tadastu me ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 10, Sloka 24

"I do not want what I do not get. I do not wish to abandon what I have. Even if what is lost is happiness and what has come about is sorrow, I am myself and shall be within my Self. Whatever it may be, I am not concerned."

"King Janaka mulled over thus for some more time. This line of thought, however, changed his earlier intention to observe silence and to be in seclusion. He resolved to carry on with the chores his body was habituated to. He decided to function without any attachment to the physical body and without succumbing to the pleasures and pains dictated by the mind. So he had a bath and performed daily worship etc. as suggested by the guard."

During the following night, sitting alone, King Janaka again cogitated on the essence of truth. Sage Valmiki portrayed Janaka's thought process in about 30 slokas in the 11th Sarga. Valmiki established in this description the qualities of a liberated person (*jīvanmukta*). The state of King Janaka as a liberated person was described in the following 12th Sarga.

भविष्यं नानुसंधत्ते नातीतं चिन्तयत्यसौ ।
वर्तमाननिमेषं तु हसन्नेवानुवर्तते ।।

bhaviṣyaṃ nānusaṃdhatte nātītaṃ cintayatyasau |
vartamānanimeṣaṃ tu hasannevānuvartate ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 12, Sloka 14

"The King was not worried about the future. Nor did he delve into the past. He happily followed on with whatever happened in the present. It was *not* that he *went through*; he *went along with the present*. In other words, he stayed as a blissful Self within himself ! Though attending to all his royal obligations, he essentially remained in Self without falling for temptations."

Sage Valmiki extended the 12th Sarga to 40 verses that depict King Janaka's liberated state. The stream of thinking desirable in an enlightened man was charmingly portrayed in these verses. Sage Valmiki emphasized repeatedly on the need of maintaining a sustained discretionary transcendent wisdom (*prajna*).

य एव यत्नः क्रियते बाह्यार्थोपार्जने जनैः ।
स एव यत्नः कर्तव्यः पूर्वं प्रज्ञाविवर्धने ।।

ya eva yatnaḥ kriyate bāhyārthopārjane janaiḥ |
sa eva yatnaḥ kartavyaḥ pūrvaṃ prajñāvivardhane ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga12, Sloka 26

"There was a high-flying business tycoon. He did not care to pray nor did he have devotion to gods. He had no interest in music, poetry, theater or fine arts. But he used to get up early in the dawn and look into all his business accounts. He was always the first person to reach his office in the morning and open doors. He used to dedicate himself fully to his work till late into night. Wouldn't you call this deep meditation (*tapas*) ?

He could become a millionaire as a result of his focused, disciplined and steadfast resoluteness to his business. His commitment was a deep meditation for him and his wealth was its fruit. Notice any person in this world reaching the pinnacle of glory in his chosen field. We find unswerving dedication as the most common factor. Irrespective of who it is, behind every successful individual is tenacious effort.

"A spiritual aspirant should take notice of it. Just like a man of the world toils hard resolutely to attain success, the spiritual seeker too needs to strive immensely to achieve transcendent awareness (*prajna*) capable of revealing the Supreme Self. One should not become indolent as it could dampen transcendent awareness. This awareness is a valuable jewel in the heart. Every desire gets fulfilled in its presence."

The Twelfth Sarga consists of 40 verses with many similar motivating words for an aspirant.

The Thirteenth Sarga deals with various methods of calming down the mind as a quietened mind is essential for the emergence of transcendent awareness. Sage Vasishta described here in detail and repeatedly the ways and means of training the mind to achieve transcendental awareness, dissolving the mind using the mind itself as a tool and so on. The Sarga contains several tips for a spiritual seeker. As a result, the Sarga has grown to be 117 verses long. Still not satisfied with it, Sage Vasishta continued the subject into the 14th Sarga with 66 more verses. He discussed a few more methods of meditating on Self in this Sarga.

7. Giving up Desires – Contemplation-based and Wisdom based Approaches

Sage Vasishta expanded on the subject of calming down the mind by 27 more verses in the Fifteenth Sarga. He began with a question on what was mind. He explained that the Supreme Self had become mind by a modification. He said that the mind could become back again the Supreme Self by reversing the process. If, instead, he warned, we run after the mind, we would succumb to it and would acquiesce to desire. The Sage spelt that capitulation to desire was the root cause of all our troubles. He ended the Sarga with the following advice:

एतामहंभावमयीमपुण्यां छित्त्वानहंभावशलाकयैव ।
स्वभावनां भव्य भवान्तभूमौ भवाभिभूताखिलभूतभीतिः ।।

etāmahaṃbhāvamayīmapuṇyāṃ chittvānahaṃbhāvaśalākayaiva |
svabhāvanāṃ bhavya bhavāntabhūmau bhavābhibhūtākhilabhūtabhītiḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 15, Sloka 27

"Oh, Rama! Desire is another form of I-consciousness (ego). Therefore, it is unholy. Cut it out with a pair of scissors called egolessness. That way you will reach a space beyond worldliness (**भवान्तभूमौ** *bhavānta bhūmau*). That is to say that you will attain the Seventh Step of Yoga where the state of bondage (*samsara*) ends. Once you are there, you are totally fearless — you can neither harm anybody nor be harmed by anybody. Reach that Supreme Seventh Step and be there forever !"

The above advice provoked Rama to raise a question. The Sixteenth Sarga opens with Rama's query.

Rama: "Revered Teacher! Ego of an individual is comparable to the stem of a tree. If the stem is chopped off, the tree will crash down. An individual too collapses in the absence of ego. No seeker would like to die, end himself. So, my dear Teacher, how could I continue to be alive after discarding my ego ? How can I adopt a practice that endangers my very existence?"

Vasishta: "Rama! It's all the same whether one speaks of throwing away desire, giving up expectation, annulling the mind or eliminating impressions of past births. There are two ways to do it. These are:

1. Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions, and
2. Wisdom-based Eradication of Impressions.

"The difference between them arises because egoism, the root cause of all impressions, is also of two types. These are:

- 1. I-Consciousness (Ego) influenced by the ensemble of body and sense faculties etc.;
- 2. I-Consciousness dependent on the essence of Oneness of Supreme Consciousness.

"I shall first explain the I-Consciousness centered on body and sense organs etc. "A person usually thinks on the following lines:

'Physical body, various organs and the sustaining food and drink, combined together form "I". Where would "I" be in their absence? What would "I" do? On the other hand, all things including food and drink derive existence because of me! They owe their existence to me and I owe my existence to them. All things are born for me and I am born for them.'

"Association with noble persons is advantageous for him to become wiser in course of time. His thinking then takes a new turn:

'How can the things in the world be mine? What is the relation between these things and me? They are all inert, insentient. I am sentient and conscious. How can the two be the same?'

"These questions are followed up by him in search of truth. He concludes from his analysis that right from *pancha bhūtas* (the five elements that constitute the world) up to mind are untrue. Thereon he ascribes a new meaning to "I". He decides that "I" is that residual pure Consciousness which remains after everything from the five elements to mind is eliminated. It is the same as what I referred to earlier as the second type of egoism. We call it "I-Consciousness dependent on the essence of Oneness of Supreme Consciousness." The difference is only in nomenclature, but not in substance as such.

"To wrap up: An individual sets out with an ignorant idea that he is his body. Gradually he moves on to understand at an intellectual level that he is not his body, he is not any of the things in the visible world. Implicitly it means that he is discarding through contemplation his impression of past births that he is his body etc. Therefore, it is referred to as "Getting rid of impressions through contemplation."

You can see that a meditation-like method of contemplation is involved here. Hence the name, 'Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions'.

"The person in the state which is free of impressions is described as "Liberated in this Life." Famous persons like King Janaka are examples for this. Having gotten rid of the impressions of past births, these Liberated persons live in the world unaffected by anything. That is their remarkable trait.

"We hardly need now to expand on the second type of I-Consciousness – the one dependent on the essence of Oneness of the Supreme Self. We have discussed it already. After eradicating the impressions through contemplation and keeping the mind constantly focused thus, the aspirant enters into a 'Thoughtless state of Deep Meditation' - a state where his consciousness stays dissolved in the Supreme Self with an experience of total Oneness (*nirvikalpa samādhi*). While he is in the *nirvikalpa samādhi* state, his current suffrage (*prārabdha karma*) comes to an end. His body dies. That is to say that his ego is exterminated along with its cause due to the Wisdom gained. His ego being exterminated means that the impressions of past births are wiped out. As this has happened with a gain of wisdom, it is termed as "Wisdom-based Eradication of Impressions."

"We can understand from the above that Wisdom-based Eradication is possible only to a person who is liberated and has left the body. He will merge with the Supreme for good. The world does not have any effect on him.

"Rama, please follow this carefully. The person who practices Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions is Liberated in this Life. The one who practices Wisdom-based Eradication of Impressions is liberated and without body. As far as liberation is concerned, both are the same. Sorrow does not affect either of them. But one is Arisen (arisen from deep meditation – *samādhi*). The other continues to be in deep meditation (*samādhi)*. The former is with the body, but untroubled. The latter is without a body.

"Hence Rama, we cannot for sure hold that ending of egoism is equivalent to Wisdom-based Eradication of Impressions and the person would die because the current suffrage (*prārabdha*) is totally annihilated. In case there is some residual balance of current suffrage, termination of impressions and eradication of ego will stop at the stage of Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions. He is liberated but he will not die.

"Whoever does not think in terms of likes and dislikes, agreeing and disagreeing, acceptance and denial is known as a person "Liberated in this Life" (*jīvanmukta*). Though awake, he lives as if he is in deep sleep without any attachment. Therefore, Rama, Be fearless to become a person Liberated in this Life through Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions and Contemplation-based Eradication of ego.

"Let me elaborate a bit on the state of a *jīvanmukta*."

The sun was setting by the time Sage Vasishta's discourse reached this point. Tradition does not admit giving up daily ritualistic functions however intensely one may be involved in spiritual enquiry. So Sage Vasishta called it a day for the discussions and proceeded to perform his evening prayers. Thus ended the dialogue on the eleventh day.

Sage Vasishta resumed his dialog on the qualities of *jīvanmukta* the next morning with the same vigor as on the previous evening. Sage Valmiki used two Sargas (the Seventeenth and the Eighteenth) comprising 99 verses to narrate Vasishta's teaching.

In the first Sarga, Valmiki neatly classified the mental intentions into two groups-

(i) Intentions that will lead an individual to *jīvanmukti,* and

(ii) Intentions that will lead to bondage.

In the next Sarga he described the way a *jīvanmukta* should go about in performing his daily chores without being bound or affected by his actions. Sage Vasishta gave a detailed description on *jīvanmukti* in order to inspire Rama to work towards it. Closing his remarks he said as follows:

Vasishta: "Rama! You must have gone through millions of births in this beginningless flow of the world! It, therefore, follows that every living creature in the world is related to you at some time or the other. Hence you cannot consider that only a limited few are your relatives based on the present body. In one way all living beings are linked to you; in another way, if you consider that you have no connection to your body, there's none that belongs to you."

विविधजन्मशताहितसंभ्रमे जगति बन्धुरबन्धुरितीक्षणम् ।
भ्रमदशैव विवल्गति वस्तुतस्त्रिभुवनं चिरबन्धुरबन्ध्वपि ।।

vividhajanmaśatāhitasaṃbhrame jagati bandhurabandhuritīkṣaṇam |
bhramadaśaiva vivalgati vastuta-stribhuvanaṃ cirabandhurabandhvapi ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 18, Sloka 65

Sage Vasishta continued into the next Sarga (the nineteenth Sarga) with the Story of Punya and Paavana (Punya Paavana Upakhyana) to illustrate clearly the concepts discussed thus far.

8. The story of Punya and Pāvana (A Discussion on Relationships)

"Once upon a time there lived an eminent Sage by name Dīrghatapa in Mahendra Hills on the banks of the river Akasaganga. He had two sons. The elder was Punya and the second one was Pāvana. Both the sons practiced meditation. In due course the elder one, Punya, achieved Self-realization. Paavana attained an intellectual understanding of the Supreme Self but did not have an actual experience of the Supreme.

"Sage Dīrghatapa, their father, died suddenly one day. Their mother, though distressed in the beginning, could compose herself quickly. She left her body using yogic powers and followed her husband in death.

"However, Pāvana could not stand the sad demise of both his parents at the same time. Unable to bear the loss, he ran away deep into a forest forgetting that he had to perform the funeral rites for his parents. He cried profusely over the death of his parents.

"Punya waited for some time for his brother and then completed the formalities of last rites for their parents. He then went in search of his brother. He found him in the forest mourning the death of both parents. He pitied his younger brother who was lost in grief ignorant that their parents achieved liberation after leaving the body.

So he addressed his brother as follows:

Punya: "My Little Brother! Why do you grieve so much shedding tears incessantly? Both the parents are liberated. Should you cry for those who achieved salvation? Is not salvation the attainment of Original Form? Both of them are in their infinite True Form, which is non dualistic.

"On the contrary, look at yourself! You are binding yourself with illusory attachment for them as 'my father' and 'my mother'. Let me ask you if she was the only mother of yours? Was he the only father for you ? Or are you the only child for them ?

"A tree bears hundreds of fruits in each season. Some of them dry up and some get dispersed. Some of these germinate again. Eventually they become trees and bear hundreds of fruits in turn. Similarly, you get a mother and a father in each of your births. Just as several leaves surround a fruit, there are many relatives around you in each birth of yours. Myriads of seasons elapsed so far. So also you had numerous births thus far. Innumerable fathers and mothers of yours passed away by now.

"If you opine that you should cry for your dead parents, you have to keep crying for the parents of earlier births also. But you don't do that. Why ? Is it because you don't realize that you had past births? Don't you know that you had parents in the past lives and they are dead now ? Why do you not cry for all of them ? Why do you cry only for the parents of this birth ? Please think it over.

"My Brother ! You are a learned man. It's not that you are unaware. The world is a sort of illusion. We can neither call it real nor can we say it is unreal. That is why, we say it is a fallacy (an apparition, *mithya*). In transcendental absolute terms (*paramārtha*), there is no reality in the world. That is to say that you have truly no friends, no relatives, nor any birth or death.

"You may say that you see people, their births and deaths and so much happening around. Yes, surely we see all that. What you see is as true as a mirage. Entirely like the water, waves, eddies and currents in a mirage. There is no greater truth than this."

Sage Valmiki closed the 19th Sarga abruptly here midway through the preaching by Punya. He opened the twentieth Sarga with a resumption of the oration by Punya. The reason for breaking the sermon at this point appears to be to emphasize a different aspect – that of freeing an individual from the illusion of relationships. The 20th Sarga highlights the falsity of relationships through a discussion of the sequence of births. Let us continue on with Punya's teaching.

Punya: "Brother! You are feeling bad for your parents. Consider it in depth. Is there really a father or a mother in the world ? Or is it only a concept ? We do not know for sure who our parents are. For some reasons we take it for granted and accept that so and so are our father and mother.

बन्धुत्वे भावितो बन्धुः परत्वे भावितः परः ।
विषामृतदशेवेह स्थितिर्भावनिबन्धनी ।।

bandhutve bhāvito bandhuḥ paratve bhāvitaḥ paraḥ |
viṣāmṛtadaśeveha sthitirbhāvanibandhanī ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 20, Sloka 3

"If you think a person is allied to you, he is a friend. If you think one is an enemy he becomes a foe. You reject some foods as poison. But another creature eats the same and happily lives. You may brand an insect as poisonous. It is your viewpoint. The insect has its own opinion. Every relationship in the world works likewise. Now tell me, who is truly related to you ?

"I do not suppose that you are under the false impression that you are your body. Still I would like to explicate a bit on this.

"What is body ? It is just skin and bones with some blood and muscle thrown in between. All these are inert materials. But how about you? You are conscious, sentient. How could you be the insentient skin and bones ? Just think it over.

"Here are two bodies. One is called Punya. The other's name is Paavana. There is one "I" in this body and an "I" in the other body. The "I" resident in my body is not the skin and bones. The "I" in your body is also not skin and bones. In the same way your parents resident in their bodies are not the skin and bones. If that is the case, to whom do the names Punya and Pāvana, father and mother belong? Do the names refer to the inert skin and bones or to the "I" residing in them ? Please deliberate on this."

Pāvana: "Brother, I agree that the skin and bones are not "I". But it is not correct to say that the subtler body inside is not "I" either. The names like Punya, Pāvana, father, mother etc., pertain to the subtler body residing in the respective gross body."

Punya: "If it is so, does the subtler body remain the same through various births or does it change and a new one comes every time?"

Pāvana: "How can there be a change in the subtle body (*linga śarīra*). It has been there from time immemorial."

Punya: "Ok, Let us say so. Then it would mean that there has been a father and mother for your subtle body each time you were born. All the parents of your past births are dead now. Why don't you grieve for them?"

Pāvana: "Do you mean to say that I should find the genealogy of my past lives and grieve for all of my past parents?"

Punya: "How is genealogy relevant? You were born as a beast in some births. You were born as a tree in a forest. You were a lion in the hills. You were fish in ponds. You were born as monkeys in hamlets. Sometimes you were born as a prince. You were born even as a wild crow. Once you were an elephant in the Haihaya kingdom. You were born as a worm on a palm tree. You were an insect on a fig tree. You were born as an ant in the hollow of a birch tree. After that you were born straight as my younger brother. I am not referring to the present birth. This was in some past life. Once you were a dung beetle and later my brother. In another life of yours, you had been born to a woman of a hunter tribe and in the following birth you were once again my brother.

"Brother, it is not you alone. I even had several births. I was born as a parrot, frog, eagle, crocodile, and in many other forms. In my past birth, I was the son of a teacher in the Srisaila Mountains. Now I am your elder brother. I am aware of my and your births. Having known all the births, for whom should I mourn? For which brother should I cry ? For which parents should I weep?

"There is only one way to resolve the puzzle. You say, "My relatives." Discover what the first word "My" and "I" refer to. If you find that out truly, the concept of "I" evaporates. With that goes the illusion of relationships as well as the sorrow of losing them.

"So, first arrest the swell of sorrow overtaking you. Curb the surging desires in your mind ? Look for the Self within you. By doing so, all the worldly impressions fade away automatically. You will find yourself in your natural placid, pure and pristine form. You will have enduring contentment."

"With the above words of Punya, the younger brother attained Self-realization. He achieved Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions of past births and a serene mind. Both the brothers gained liberation while still living (*jīvanmukti*). They lived for long years as it pleased them wandering around in the forest."

Sage Vasishta wound up saying, "The moral of the story is, Rama, you should also get rid of the feeling of 'My people, my relations.' Take refuge in Contemplation-based Eradication of Desires; be liberated in this life itself and live as a *jīvanmukta*."

Though the advice was as simple as that, Sage Vasishta actually extended it to a length of 30 verses. Any reader of the current Chapter, The Calm Down (*Upasama*) of Yoga Vasishta is bound to wonder at Vasishta's circumlocution. But as a matter of fact, the entire scheme of Vasishta's teaching is hidden inside this expansion. Let us explain.

There are a total of nine stories in the Chapter: The Calm Down. Two stories have so far been narrated. The first was the story of King Janaka and the second was that of Punya and Paavana. Strictly speaking, there is nothing much in terms of a plot in any of these two stories. Sage Vasishta took advantage of the characters of each story and developed an intricate discussion.

An intellectual explication of the Philosophical Wisdom to be imparted to Rama ended with the Chapter on Sustenance - Sthiti Prakarana (Yoga Vasishta Book 4 of our Series). Sage Vasishta steered the discourse now towards a discussion on The Methods of Practice. The current Chapter was accordingly titled "The Calm Down." Calming down refers to dissolution of the mind. Sage Vasishta planned to talk on different types of practices available to quieten the mind and offer a reasonable explanation of the operative processes behind each of the techniques.

The Vedic dictum,

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति । यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।

yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | yena jātāni jīvanti | yatprayantyabhisaṃviśanti |

ṭaittariyopaniśad 1-3-1

underpins all his teachings. Consequently, his talk too had to be designed to match the order of 'Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution of the Universe' referred to in the above scriptural statement. Keeping this in mind, Sage Vasishta intended to make the story of Gadhi Brahmana as the central focus of this Chapter. However, ahead of this story and following it too, he wanted to highlight a few salient aspects pertaining to the differences amongst the various methods. Instead of randomly listing them, he planned to highlight the differences in an orderly sequential manner converging onto the Story of Gadhi Brahmana and then branch out again to other minor stories.

The stories of Janaka and Punya – Pāvana were the first two sub-stories coming before the principal story of Gadhi Brahmana.

King Janaka's story illustrated how an unexpected event of hearing a good word could make a lasting impression and subsequently lead to a quietened mind. The story of Punya – Paavana demonstrated how a Self-realized person would take care of and help individuals who were mid-way in the process of achieving a tranquil mind.

The Story of Bali coming next would prove how an unplanned self-introspection reinforced by the encouraging word of a teacher could lead to sudden Self-realization.

In order to introduce the story, Sage Vasishta addressed the following words to Rama at the beginning of the 22nd Sarga:

Vasishta: "May you be blessed with a sudden Self-realization as happened to Emperor Bali!"

Rama: "Who was Emperor Bali and how did he get realized ?"

Sage Vasishta then recounted the story of Emperor Bali.

9. The story of Emperor Bali

Vasishta: "Rama! You must have heard of Emperor Bali who is the ruler of the nether world. Lord Vishnu ordained him to the nether world in his incarnation as Vaamana. He achieved glory in his rule and has been living in opulence for eons.

"You may think that nether world is synonymous with Hell. Hell is only one part of the nether world. It is the part where sinners get punished. Undoubtedly it is a miserable part. The rest of the nether world is very beautiful. The Puranas say that comforts exceeding Heaven exist in this part.

"Bali enjoyed the affluence for a very long time and got finally fed up. He was totally disgusted with luxury. He undertook an appraisal of the cycles of life and death in general and his own condition in particular. His thoughts were somewhat on the following lines:

"How long should I continue as a ruler? How long should I run after the comforts of life? Same things recur on and on like days followed by nights. I am really tired of all this. The whole thing looks very childish. How long should I put up with all this?"

"Under the weight of such intense thoughts, Emperor Bali unknowingly slipped into deep meditation. When he came out of meditation after some time, he remembered an event that had taken place during his childhood. It was a conversation he had had as a young boy with his father Virochana. Their discussion went as follows.

Bali: "Oh, Father Virochana, King of Demons! What is the limit beyond which fallacies can't exist ? Where does the mind lose its delusion ? What is the place where all the three desires (viz: for wife, children and wealth) are no more there ? What is the place from which there is no return to the cycle of births ?"

Bali asked many such questions. As both (the questioner and the respondent) were of royal descent, Emperor Virochana replied in a style suited to the royalty.

Virochana: "My dear Son, Bali ! Yes, there is a place like that. It is very huge. But there are no forests or mountains. Nor mighty oceans nor the five elements (*Pancha bhutas*). There are no men, gods or demons in that place. Only two are present there – a king and a minister!

"The Minister is very competent. He can destroy what exists or create what does not exist. He is the only one serving the king. The king stays happy in seclusion in his own place. That is the place you are asking for.

Bali: "Where is that place? How do I reach it ? How do I conquer it ?"

Virochana: "My dear son! The King there is alone. But the Minister has millions of soldiers under his command. Gods, Demons and everyone surrendered to him as they were unable to overpower him. Only the King can subdue him. But even he can do so only with the strength accumulated from meritorious deeds of many births. Son, you consider yourself invincible ! I will accept your valor if you can defeat that Minister."

Bali: "Father, please tell me the way to vanquish the Minister."

Virochana: "There is only one way! That is the Raja Yoga. If a king is with us, the minister will automatically come to us. If the minister is on our side, the king allies easily with us. That is quite normal in our world.

"It holds true in this kingdom too. You should overcome both the King and the Minister simultaneously. Only then can you get hold of the kingdom. Son, I am talking in symbolic jargon. I hope you could grasp the meaning. Anyway let me tell you directly.

"The place I was talking about is not an ordinary kingdom. It is the state of salvation. The King there is the Supreme Self. The Minister is mind. The mind carries the impressions from past births. Just as vapor turns into clouds, the impressions carried in the mind change into the physical world. They get modified. So if you win over the Minister i.e. mind, it is as good as winning the entire world. Mere physical strength is inadequate; you need dexterity to be victorious."

Bali: "What kind of skills do I need?"

Virochana: "Son, you should be free of desire for worldly objects. That is the first skill. It is not easy to come by, though. You have to cultivate it gradually. Whether one calls it Renunciation of the objective world or Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions, it is the same thing. You should make a concerted effort to achieve it.

"In my opinion, an individual (*jīva*) is none other than the mind in worldly terms (*vyāvahārika*). The mind creates two types of things. One is the Objective type (*niyata*) and the other is the Imaginary type (*aniyata*). The objective things are what we see around in the world – trees, mountains, creatures etc. Imaginary ones are the illusory type. They are born out of our fallacy. Examples are a mirage, snake in a rope, silver in nacre etc.

"The ways of the mind are strange indeed. Along with the substances it creates, it formulates certain laws too for its products. Sometimes because of the sheer momentum of the natural laws an individual may become eligible for salvation. He will have a future birth only to attain Self-realization. That is to say he will achieve a state of deep meditation (*nirvikalpa samādhi*) where his consciousness stays dissolved in the Cosmic Consciousness. He shines brightly in his True form (*svasvarupa*) in this life without attachment to anything.

"Sometimes the same individual may take recourse to scriptures and perform meritorious deeds. The Self inside remains unaffected whether he is in meditation or has been performing actions. It is not that Self got detached now or that it was attached. This reminds us:

स्फुरति सानुवत् *sphurati sänuvat*

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 24, Sloka 34

"There is a huge mountain slope in the distance. There are many trees on it. A person on the ground looks at it from far away. He sees the slope to be as stable as a rock. Suppose now there is a gush of wind. The trees on the rock slope begin to sway. The swing in the trees appears as if the mountain slope itself is moving. The onlooker now feels the mountain slope is unstable. In truth the mountain slope is neither moving nor unmoving.

The apparent movement is because of wind. Likewise, Self has neither a tendency to meditate nor an inclination for action. The apparent feel is a trick of the mind.

"Therefore, Son, there is neither a God nor any Law of Nature in the way we imagine. What is there for sure is the mind. Let the residual thing, whatever that is, stay behind after the mind is eradicated.

मनस्यस्तंगते साधो यद्भवत्यस्तु तत्तथा ।

manasyastaṃgate sādho yadbhavatyastu tattathā |

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 24, Sloka 35

"The individual gets a body. With that he gets eligibility to perform rituals and to gain wisdom. He is empowered with thought. Hence whatever he intends takes place. Therefore, make a full-fledged effort to practice detachment and other methods and realize that "I am the Supreme Self." Do not let any contrary thought disturb you.

"Desire for material comforts is the first block in realizing "I am myself Brahman." Kill desire. For, as long as you have desire for pleasure, you are for certain stuck in the rut of the world.

न भोगेष्वरतिर्यावज्जायते भवनाशनी
न परा निर्वृतिस्तावत्प्राप्यते जयदायिनी

na bhogeṣvaratiryāvajjāyate bhavanāśanī
na parā nirvṛtistāvatprāpyate jayadāyinī

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 24, Sloka 38

Bali: "How do I get rid of the desire for pleasure?"

Virochana: "Only through knowledge of Self."

Bali: "How do I get that knowledge?"

Virochana: "Only through an inquiry into truth."

Bali: "Is it easy to inquire into the truth?"

Virochana: "No, it is not so for an average person. In order to position the immature mind on a proper path, you should divide a day into four parts. Leave two parts of the day for pleasure. Take care to see that pleasure does not exceed two parts. One part of the day should be spent in listening to scriptures. Listening does not mean mere desultory auditioning. It should become a cerebral exercise to firm up the understanding that "each statement of the Upanishads is an exposition about the truth regarding Supreme Brahman. Only such a stream of thoughts constitutes 'listening'. The remaining fourth part should be spent in the service of the teacher.

"As the mind gets progressively purified, utilize one of the two parts set apart for pleasure for serving the teacher. That means you would spend one part of the day on enjoyment, one part for listening to scriptures and two parts in the service of the teacher. With an increasingly purified mind, one part of the day may be spent on listening to scriptures, the second part in practicing detachment, third part in meditation and the fourth part in the service of the teacher.

"During this practice a seeker has to protect his mind as watchfully as one would take care of a little baby."

शनैः शनैर्लालनीयं युक्तिभिः पावनोक्तिभिः ।
शास्त्रार्थपरिणामेन पालयेच्चित्तबालकम् ।।

śanaiḥ śanairlālanīyaṃ yuktibhiḥ pāvanoktibhiḥ |
śāstrārthapariṇāmena pālayeccittabālakam ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 24, Sloka 49

"The mind needs to be taught several tricks as we do to a child. We have to reason out. Speak encouragingly. Cajole and coax. We should keep evaluating progress as stipulated in the scriptures. One should not rush up. Practice of detachment and self-inquiry should go hand in hand. They develop mutually reinforcing each other. Once you are averse to pleasures, your mind turns towards the Supreme and rests there. The longer the mind stays in the Supreme, the less will be the craving for enjoyment.

"Learn to despise enjoyment. Despise doesn't mean blaming. Recognition of the ill effects of pleasure amounts to despising it. When this recognition takes a firm root, desire for pleasure decreases and Self-enquiry proportionately intensifies. Eventually you will find nothing worthwhile for enjoyment. So desire for pleasure diminishes further. The three actions of despising joys, enquiring after truth and gaining Self-knowledge go hand in hand. They strengthen one another.

"My dear Son, you have an aversion for pleasure without trying for it. You are sanctified. You appear as Lord Shiva to me. I salute you, whom I view as Lord Shiva."

नमस्तेऽस्तु सदाशिव *namaste'stu sadaashiva*

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 24, Sloka 70

"The whole conversation between Bali and Virochana took place a long time ago when Bali was still a young lad. Emperor Bali, sitting in the nether world, was remembering fondly and reminiscing about the event. Goosebumps grew on Bali when he recollected the scene of his father, deeply immersed in the Supreme, bowing to him with the words *'Namaste astu Sadashiva'* while explaining to him about Self. He continued thinking as follows -

Bali: "I can recall each word of my father on that day. Fortunately, I grew averse to pleasures today. I remember how I used to run after comforts. Now that I am free of any such yearning, I am very calm.

शाम्यामि परिनिर्वामि सुखमासे शमे स्थितः ।
अयमन्तः प्रहृष्यामि चन्द्रबिम्ब इवार्पितः ।।

śāmyāmi parinirvāmi sukhamāse śame sthitaḥ |
ayamantaḥ prahṛṣyāmi candrabimba ivārpitaḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 25, Sloka 8

"I feel liberated. I am happy and peaceful. I am overjoyed in my heart. I am on cloud nine. I feel as if I am seated on the moon. I will strive to establish this feeling firmly by practicing contemplation relentlessly.

कोऽयं तावदहं किं स्यादात्मेत्यात्मावलोकनम्

ko'yaṃ tāvadahaṃ kiṃ syādātmetyātmāvalokanam

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 2, Sloka 18

"I shall inquire into issues like who I am and what this world is. But I am inadequate to do that all by myself. I shall invoke the presence of our family Guru, Sukra Acharya. I shall take his help. If he bestows me with necessary knowledge, my ignorance will come to an end. I will be able to attain my pristine original form."

10. Discussion on Consciousness

With these thoughts, Emperor Bali prayed intensely for his Guru. Vibrations of his prayer reached Guru Sukra. Sukra could surmise that his disciple was seeking help in his inquiry into truth. Sukra appeared before Bali. Bali welcomed the Guru with joy, paid respects with due rituals and seated him on the throne. He addressed him (Guru) in the following words:

Bali: "Revered Teacher! With your kind blessings I feel illuminated. I have grown repulsed by riches. I am impatient to know the truth. Where is the limit for worldly pleasures ? What is the root cause for worldly pleasures ? Who am I ? Who are you ? What are these worlds ?

कियन्मात्रमिदं भोगजालं किमयमेव वा ।
कोऽहं कस्त्वं किमेते वा लोका इति वदाशु मे ।।

kiyanmātramidaṃ bhogajālaṃ kimayameva vā |
ko'haṃ kastvaṃ kimete vā lokā iti vadāśu me ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 26, Sloka 9

"Please enlighten me."

Sukra: "Sorry, I am not that free now to talk at length. I am in a hurry to go somewhere via the celestial path. Why do you have to pose so many questions? I shall tell you the crux behind all this in a few words. Please listen attentively.

चिदिहास्ति हि चिन्मात्रमिदं चिन्मयमेव च ।
चित्त्वं चिदहमेते च लोकाश्चिदिति संग्रहः ।।

cidihāsti hi cinmātramidaṃ cinmayameva ca |
cittvaṃ cidahamete ca lokāściditi saṃgrahaḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 26, Sloka 11

"Look around carefully. What you see is nothing but Consciousness only!"

Bali: "But I see both the sentient and the insentient."

Sukra: "That's the mistake you make. There is Consciousness only."

Bali: "Then how about all the inert matter I see?"

Sukra: "There is no inert material at all. What all exists is Consciousness only. What you see is a transformation of Consciousness. What appears to be inert matter is also Consciousness."

Bali: "How could that be? I am a sentient being and therefore, I am the experiencer. The matter is inert and therefore, I experience it. This is common in the world. Do you think that the division into experiencer and the experienced is false?"

Sukra: "The Vedas declare: '**नान्योतोस्ति द्रष्टा , नान्योतोस्ति श्रोता**' '*nanyotosti draśtā, nanyotosti srotā'*. There is no seer or listener other than Pure Consciousness. There are hundreds of such aphorisms in the scriptures. Hence both you and me considered as experiencers are also a transformation of Consciousness."

Bali: "Okay, I agree. What about the things that we experience? What about the world comprising things that we experience?"

Sukra: "From where do they draw their existence and appearance? They are contingent upon Consciousness. They are a modification of Consciousness. There is no other way. The Vedas also state, '**ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्टं**' "*brahmaivedam visvamidam variśtam*. The entire visible world is the Supreme Brahman. Hence the world is Consciousness. Bali ! In short, that is the essence of the whole Truth." "That's all there is to it if you examine intelligently and diligently. In the absence of an intelligent understanding, anything spoken is like trying to sweeten seawater, utterly wasteful. I shall clarify once more."

चिच्चेत्यकलनाबन्धस्तन्मुक्तिर्मुक्तिरुच्यते ।
चिदचेत्याखिलात्मेति सर्वसिद्धान्तसंग्रहः ।।

ciccetyakalanābandhastanmuktirmuktirucyate |
cidacetyākhilātmeti sarvasiddhāntasaṃgrahaḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 26, Sloka 13

"It is bondage when Consciousness becomes the Seen (*driśya*) instead of being mere Potent-Looker (*drik*). In other words, the mutual superimposition of the Potent-Looker and the Seen is the cause for 'attachment to the world'. It is Liberation when consciousness remains as Pure Consciousness without getting modified as the Seen. That is to say that liberation comes with consciousness losing the form of the objective world. Consciousness, free of any attachment to the Seen, is the Self of all creatures. That is the perfect Self. This is the gist of all philosophy.

"My dear Bali, if you can contemplate resolutely on this, you will achieve the everlasting Supreme state.

"The Seven Great Sages have assembled in Heaven on an important divine errand. I have to join them. Even liberated persons have to necessarily go through the effects of their past deeds (*prārabdhā*), you see."

Speaking thus, Sage Sukra disappeared along the celestial route. Emperor Bali pondered over every word spoken by their family Guru, Sukra.

Bali: "Yes, what the Guru said was very true. Everything is Consciousness. Consciousness has become the world. It became the quarters (*diśas*). It became the earth, the five elements, all the creatures and even I-consciousness.

"Who am I? People call this body Bali. If the body is beheaded, is there any loss for Consciousness? In fact there are no parts within Consciousness so that it is possible to hack them. Consciousness permeates everywhere.

चितश्चिदिति यन्नाम निर्नामाया न नाम तत् ।
शब्दात्मिकैषा चिच्छक्तिः परिस्फुरति सर्वगा ।।

citaściditi yannāma nirnāmāyā na nāma tat |
śabdātmikaiṣā cicchaktiḥ parisphurati sarvagā ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 27, Sloka 19

"But what is Consciousness? Who gave it a name? Nobody gave a name to it. The primordial root substance has no name. The name and form for everything has emerged from it. How did the names and various forms come into existence ? They came about only through illusory appearance. What appears is nothing but a fallacy. The names and forms are superimposed on the root substance. Even the name Consciousness has come about in the same illusory way. The primordial substance which is the substratum for all names and forms appears with a name to itself as Consciousness through the same illusory process. Therefore, even the name Consciousness appears to permeate all things just like the primordial substance.

"Usually a given name refers to a specific thing. How is it possible for one single name to represent all things? This is possible because Consciousness itself has changed into all things and if a thing is present at a place, it automatically implies that Consciousness too is present there. As Consciousness is present, the name also becomes applicable at that point.

Therefore, if a thing is present in the world anywhere, the primordial substance exists there and hence the name Consciousness too is valid at that point. Hence the name Consciousness is permeating everywhere like the omnipresent primordial substance.

"I am that Consciousness. When I am ignorant, a perturbation called mind (*manas*) comes into being and I myself appear as the insentient world. If I am enlightened by understanding the truth. I lose differentiation based on name and form and get dissolved into Oneness."

Because Bali was an extremely wise person, his mind merged into (the primordial sound) 'AUM' (chant) while he was thus immersed in his thoughts.

इति संचिन्तयन्नेव बलिः परमकोविदः
ओंकारादर्धमात्रार्थं भावयन्मौनमास्थितः

iti saṃcintayanneva baliḥ paramakovidaḥ
oṃkārādardhamātrārthaṃ bhāvayanmaunamāsthitaḥ |

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 27, Sloka 32

The 32nd Sloka quoted above has a very profound meaning. Shri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswati, commentator of Yoga Vasishta offered a detailed exposition of this sloka in his work. We provide below a synopsis of his commentary:

"It is said that while deliberating on the truth of Consciousness, Emperor Bali's mind effortlessly merged in Aum implying a close relationship between Consciousness and Aum. What is the nature of that relationship?

"Aum has three sounds in it viz. *a*, *u* and *m*. In addition, there is also an indistinct drone. It is called the half-letter. '*a*' stands for the gross, visible physical world. It represents the wakeful state. '*u*' is for the subtle world and represents the dream state. '*m*' is for the causal world and indicates ignorance. It represents the deep sleep state. Behind all the three states is Consciousness. In other words, it is nothing but Consciousness that prevails everywhere. The consciousness indicated by '*a*' and '*u*' is in a perturbed condition. Perturbation entails a modification. The perturbation is gross at '*a*' and subtle at '*u*'. There is no perturbation at '*m*'. But it shrouds ignorance (nescience) — the root cause for the perturbations in the other two states. Consciousness is combined with ignorance at '*m*'.

Thus Pure Consciousness is not obtained at any of the three states. We have it intermixed with either perturbation or nescience. We have to go beyond the admixed consciousness; we have to transcend it. Just as one who has ascended to an upper floor of a house does not see the house but what is around it, the person who goes beyond '*a*', '*u*' and '*m*' states senses the half-letter drone beyond the three. The three states of '*a*', '*u*' and '*m*' do not manifest at the half letter state. That is to say that neither perturbations nor nescience exist in that state. Because Consciousness is all pervading, It occurs here in uncontaminated Pure form."

"Bali reached the state of Pure Consciousness. He contemplated it. He experienced it with a feeling of "I am that." He was completely silent in it. Every one of his sensory organs was quiet in this state (*sarvendriya mauna*) and there was no perception of any worldly objects. He reached *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* – a deep state of meditation where his consciousness is dissolved in the Supreme.

"Emperor Bali remained seated near the window like a statue in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* for a long time. Servants who happened to notice him reported the matter to their higher ups. Gradually the word spread to the entire retinue of the king, including the ministers, army chiefs, satraps and others. Everyone came to see him. The visitors were sad that their king lost consciousness. Some of them openly and others silently cried for him. They were all anxious at the turn of his health. In spite of all the mayhem going on, Bali stayed frozen like a rock.

"A few senior ministers, helpless to find a solution, prayed to their family teacher Sukra. Sukra appeared before them and enquired the reason for their distress. Unable to speak in their deep sorrow, they pointed towards the Emperor who stayed like a frozen statue without consciousness.

"Sukra was, however, overjoyed to look at Bali. He spoke to them in jubilant words as follows: "Oh, Brave Demons! Emperor Bali achieved the crème de la crème. He attained Eternal Supreme Happiness. He will not be able to come out of this deep meditation for at least a thousand years. Feel happy for him. Please cooperate with him by taking over the governance of the empire." Thus speaking Sukra departed. Shouldering the additional responsibilities, the officials went on with their jobs.

"Emperor Bali arose from his meditation after about a thousand years as predicted by Sukra. Bali felt very blissful. He was thinking of going back into Samadhi. But his ministers and other staff surrounded him. Bali fell back into his thoughts. He debated within himself :

'Should I speak to them or not?'

'Why should I get this doubt at all?'

'Luckily I am in this state of blissful happiness. Will I be thrown back into the world if I get involved with them?'

'Okay, you are now liberated. But were you bound previously that you say you are free now? Who did bind you?'

'No, none bound me earlier. I tied myself up in ignorance. It is foolish to think that I will get tied down by them.'

'Were you really bound earlier?'

'I am Pure Consciousness. There is no scope for bondage to me. I used to feel bad under the false notion that I was bound. Without any real bondage, I cried for freedom, liberation. Now that I think maturely, all of it sounds pretty silly. I need no meditation. Nor do I have to send away my visitors. I continue to be fully absorbed within the essence of Self. No wrong will accrue to me if I converse with them.'

"With this determination, Emperor Bali interacted with his officials and discharged his royal obligations with his mind emptied of the impressions of past births through contemplation (Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions – *dhyeya vāsana tyāga*).

"Some time later, he performed a sacrificial rite called Aswamedha. To accept the offerings made into the altar in the ritual, Lord Vishnu visited Bali along with the Lord of Gods (Indra) and others. Bali was bestowed with many boons. Bali had by then itself attained the Supreme Self. Hence he neither regretted what was lost nor did he rejoice in getting the pleasures of nether lands."

After narrating the story up to this point in the life of Emperor Bali, Sage Vasishta commented as follows:

Vasishta: "Rama! Emperor Bali would have to become the future Lord of Gods and reign over the three worlds by the sheer force of his current suffrage (*prārabdha*). When he occupies that position, Bali would not feel elated. Nor would he give up redeeming the effect of his past actions. That was so, because Bali had achieved Contemplation-based Eradication of the Impressions. Therefore, Rama, you too emulate Bali. Inquire into Self, obtain Knowledge of the Supreme and reach the Non-Dual state.

"Rama, I told you the story of King Janaka to illustrate the point that Self-realization may happen unexpectedly just as a ripened fruit falls down from the tree. The story of Punya – Paavana shows that Self-realization may come about through a discussion with peers if it has not happened through a study of scriptures or Guru's teaching. The story of Emperor Bali exemplifies the possibility of obtaining Self-realization from a recollection of the talk imbibed during childhood and contemplation over it later on at a mature age with timely reinforcement by the kind words of a Guru. There is yet another way to achieve the knowledge of the Supreme Self. It is through prayer to the Lord. One may get blessed with Self-realization by worshipping the Lord for a long time. I shall narrate to you the story of Prahlada, the grandfather of Emperor Bali to substantiate this possibility.

11. The story of Prahlada

"The Demon King Hiranyakasipa had a son by name Prahlada. Hiranyakasipa hated Lord Vishnu. Prahlada was a devout worshipper of Vishnu. Hiranyakasipa, therefore, used to torture Prahlada in several ways. Finally, one fine day God Vishnu reincarnated as Narasimha, killed Hiranyakasipa and several thousands of demons to save Prahlada.

"As Prahlada was the only heir to the throne, he was crowned the King of the Demon kingdom. Because of the war casualties, there was no military left in the kingdom. Prahlada watched helplessly as gods started troubling and harming the citizens of the demon kingdom. He grew remorseful at the situation.

"Prahlada thought deeply over the matter and decided to worship (*upāsana*) God Vishnu with a request to liberate the demons from their troubles. The course of his worship went as follows:

अविष्णुः पूजयन्विष्णुं न पूजाफलभाग्भवेत् ।
विष्णुर्भूत्वा यजेद्विष्णुमयं विष्णुरहं स्थितः ।।

aviṣṇuḥ pūjayanviṣṇuṃ na pūjāphalabhāgbhavet |
viṣṇurbhūtvā yajedviṣṇumayaṃ viṣṇurahaṃ sthitaḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 31, Sloka 40

"The prayer of a Non-Vishnu to Vishnu will not yield any result. Therefore, a seeker has to become a Vishnu and then worship Him. Yes, I am Vishnu now. Vishnu is Prahlada. I am no different from him; nor is He different from me.

"Garutman with his wings spread across the breadth of the skies is my chariot. Four hands sprouted on me. Brilliant weaponry is shining in my hands. Goddess Lakshmi is fanning me with a gentle breeze. Goddess Kirti is standing beside me. The Goddess Maya, creator of this whole world, is standing by me. It is dark in all directions compared to the brilliance of my body. The Panchajanya Conch in my hand blows AUM. I see a lotus flower on my belly-button and Brahma is seated on the lotus. I hold in my hands a mace, a sword, and a bow. I see infinite universes in my abdomen. Some of the worlds are disintegrating. Some are newly arising. The earth forms my feet. The sky is my head. The four quarters resemble my ribs. Evil-minded people are running away from me. Persons coming towards me with an antagonistic attitude are getting scorched like moths that fall into fire. Neither gods nor demons are able to stand the brilliance of my aura. All the Gods like Brahma, Indra, Agni, Hara are singing my glory who are in the form of Vishnu. I expand in all directions under the strength gained from going beyond the pairs of opposites. I salute my own macrocosmic (*virat*) form."

"Prahlada contemplated thus and created the essence of Vishnu within himself."

[From 40th to 66th verse in the 32nd Sarga, Sage Valmiki rendered in exquisite poetic splendor the way Prahlada conceived of himself as Vishnu. A daily recital of these 27 slokas is a must for those who would like to connect with their deity of worship assuming the form of the deity to their own self.

"Prahlada then began a mental worship of the essence of Vishnu he conceived within himself.

वपुषो वैष्णवादस्मान्मा भून्मूर्तिः परावरा ।
अयं प्राणप्रवाहेण बहिर्विष्णुः स्थितोऽपरः ।।

vapuṣo vaiṣṇavādasmānmā bhūnmūrtiḥ parāvarā |
ayaṃ prāṇapravāheṇa bahirviṣṇuḥ sthito'paraḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 32, Sloka 2

"May there be no Vishnu anywhere other than what I conceived ! May there be no other larger macrocosmic form than what I conceived ! May there be no shrunken partial (*vyaśti*) form of the deity! Life-force flowing through my nostrils is a form of Vishnu. May that flow solidify before me as another form of Vishnu ! May this be the basis for my mental worship !!

"Thinking in this fashion, Prahlada performed a variety of mental services to the living form of Vishnu standing in front of him. A little later, he went to his Prayer Hall, established Vishnu's idol and worshiped the idol openly.

"Seeing Prahlada worshipping Vishnu openly, all his retinue joined him in the worship. Those who are away from the royal household worshipped Vishnu in their own homes. Soon the entire demon kingdom was occupied with prayers to Vishnu. All the citizens became devotees of Vishnu following the king. '**यथा रजाः थथा प्रजाः**' '*yathā rajāḥ thathā prajāḥ*' !

Gods were surprised at this development. In a sense they were scared too. Anxious about the sort of consequences that might befall on them as a result of the demons' prayers to Vishnu, they approached Lord Vishnu. They expressed to him their apprehension of what might happen if the prayers were continued by the indolent (*tamasic*) demons. Lord Vishnu assured the gods that the prayers of Prahlada would not harm gods as it was the last birth for Prahlada. Prahlada's devotion intensified in the meanwhile. He became totally detached. He had little interest in anything other than adoring Vishnu.

"Noticing Prahlada's passionate devotion, Lord Vishnu gave an audience to Prahlada in the latter's Prayer Hall. Prahlada's joy knew no bounds. He praised the lord in magnificent words."

[This prayer is available in eight slokas (from Sloka 19 to 26) in Sarga 33.]

"Lord Vishnu was pleased with Prahlada's devotion. He asked Prahlada to wish for a boon so that the sorrow of being born again would come to an end for him.

Prahlada:

सर्वसंकल्पफलद सर्वलोकान्तरस्थित ।
यदुदारतमं वेत्सि तदेवादिश मे विभो ।।

sarvasaṃkalpaphalada sarvalokāntarasthita |
yadudāratamaṃ vetsi tadevādiśa me vibho ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 34, Sloka 2

"Lord! You are the one who is present in every universe. You are the one who fulfills the desires of all! Please bestow me with whatever is best for me."

Lord Vishnu: "Dear Prahlada! If you want to attain the supreme state of liberation dissolving all the fallacies of the world, you have to persist with relentless Self-introspection till you reach the final goal of Cosmic Consciousness. May you be blessed with such a Self inquiry!"

"Lord Vishnu granted the boon of Self-inquiry and vanished like a wave that fell back into ocean. Prahlada was thrilled and stayed there praising the Lord. A little later, Prahlada decided to commence an inquiry into Self because that was the blessing the Lord granted him.

किमहं नाम तावत्स्यां योऽस्मिन्भुवनडम्बरे । वच्मि गच्छामि तिष्ठामि प्रयत्नेनाहरामि च ।।

kimahaṃ nāma tāvatsyāṃ yo'sminbhuvanaḍambare |
vacmi gacchāmi tiṣṭhāmi prayatnenāharāmi ca ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 34, Sloka 8

"What is meant by 'I'? When I speak, it is the speech organ doing the work. When I walk, it is the pair of legs that do the locomotion. What is the work done if I just stay standing? Is any work done at all by remaining in a standing position? I am or I stand. These two are different action words. But I do not see two different types of actions.

"I received some objects. What is meant by receiving? Experiencing them is receiving them. With what do I receive things? I do so with my hands. Therefore, it is an action done by the hands. But the experience doesn't end with hands. I see the shape with my eyes, I smell with my nose, and so on. I thus experience various things with my sensory organs.

"Say I am talking. Am I the organ of speech? When I walk, am I the organ (legs) of mobility? When I stay still without action, am I simply beingness? Though I experience various things through my sensory organs, I make an effort first with my mind. Am I the mind that works from within me? Who am I?

"I cannot be the body. I cannot be the smell. I cannot be taste. Who could possibly be 'me'? "Aha! I can understand now. I am nothing but an apparition (illusionary appearance) of the changeless Consciousness. I am the force behind the sensory organs like eye, ear etc and mind. Hence I am Pure Consciousness."

Beginning with these words, Sage Valmiki extended the description of Prahlada's Self-introspective search to 283 verses spread in three Sargas as follows:

34th Sarga - 115 verses
35th Sarga - 88 verses
36th Sarga - 80 verses.

The 34th Sarga deals with how Prahlada distinguished between the Self and the rest of things that are non-Self through the strength of his discrimination and later how he determined that he was himself Pure Consciousness, the Non-Dual Supreme Self.

The 35th Sarga talks about how Prahlada analyzed the Self that he witnessed within himself as a form of "AUM" and then saluted to himself; and how he felt happy reviewing his old relationships in the light of the newly acquired wisdom.

The 36th Sarga was a depiction of Prahlada's ecstasy of attaining the Supreme Consciousness, how he worshiped and bowed to himself in that euphoric state and how he played with himself as two loving couples would do.

The Self-analysis of Prahlada finally led him to *nirvikalpa samādhi*. He remained rock-solid like a statue. He stayed in that state for a long time. His followers tried hard to bring him back to normalcy but to no avail.

With the king being unconcerned, indiscipline and corruption spread far and wide in the kingdom. Thieves and muscle men ruled the roost. Women were insecure. Gods too continued to increasingly torment the citizens of the demon land. None of this could wake Prahlada from his deep meditation.

12. The Course of Liberation And Need for Demons

Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of the world, woke up from sleep on the eleventh day after New Moon in the month of Kartika (usually falls in the first week of November as per the Gregorian calendar) in the Milky Way (*kśira samudra*). He reviewed the state of various worlds. He could find that the demon kingdom in the nether world was disintegrating.

Lord Vishnu felt concerned. He thought, "What a situation! Prahlada achieved the state of Supreme Bliss because of me. But his kingdom is decomposing. If demons are completely gone, gods will lose interest in reaching their goal. Gods are dominant in *Satva* (signifying goodness, wisdom, softness etc.) quality. In the absence of both desire to succeed and fear for their life, *rajas* (signifying activity, energy, anger etc.) quality in them will diminish. *satva* will predominate overtaking *rajas* in them leading them to detachment and a longing for liberation. This may be good for the gods. But its effect on the world of men is ominous. If the gods run after liberation, they will neglect their devotees. If that happens, men on earth will lose interest in performing good deeds. This will result in an increase of *rajas* and *Tamas* (signifies lethargy, lust, cruelty etc.) in men. They will be destroyed much earlier than Dissolution (*pralaya*). That would be a slap on my play (*līla*) of protecting the world.

"Some people assume unknowingly that natural dissolution (i.e. ending along with the natural cycle of Dissolution (*pralaya*)) itself is a great attainment. That type of dissolution is more like deep sleep. It may look beneficial for the time being. But in truth, it is not permanently advantageous. It is not liberation, freedom from rebirth. Therefore, it is nothing to be aspired for.

"It is advisable that a desire for wisdom should emanate from the performance of meritorious deeds. From that longing for wisdom should emerge an understanding of Truth. From a knowledge of Truth, one should experience Truth. With that would come permanent liberation, freedom from the cycle of births and deaths. This is the normal course to attain liberation.

"If the demonic people disappear completely in creation, this course would be affected. It should not happen. I should do something to get out of this trap.

"This is the last birth for Prahlada. It is so according to the Law of Nature as determined by the thought process of the Supreme. Nobody can change it. I have to save the world using the holy body of Prahlada. May Prahlada continue to reign though he stays liberated and continues with his desireless meditation! May he protect the Demon kingdom living in his body till the end of the current Kalpa (Total period of a Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion earth years)! May the war between the gods and demons get resumed through him!!

तन्मे क्रीडा भविष्यति *tanme krīḍā bhaviṣyati*

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 38, Sloka 23

"May that be my play!

"It is all the same for me whether the world stays stable or disintegrated. In my opinion, stability and disintegration should follow proper order. There is no specific agenda behind my plans. There is no compulsion to act one-way or the other. I shall be flexible. Let me go to the nether world and fulfill my responsibility without fear or favor."

"Lord Vishnu, having thus decided, went straight to the Prayer Hall of Prahlada. He appeared before Prahalda and blew hard on his conch, Panchjanya. The sound of the conch was so terrific that the demons were scared out of their wits. The life-force that reached Brahma randhra (Pineal plexus = *sahasrāra*) returned to the sensory organs in Prahlada. His mind gathered its strength and entered his senses. There was a sweet voice calling in his mind to wake up. That was the voice of Lord Vishnu. Prahlada was overjoyed by the Lord's voice. With happiness writ large on his face, he arose from his deep meditation. Observing Prhalada, Lord Vishnu said,

साधो स्मर महालक्ष्मीमात्मीयां स्मर चाकृतिम् ।
अकाण्ड एव किं देहविरामः क्रियते त्वया ।।

sādho smara mahālakṣmīmātmīyāṃ smara cākṛtim |
akāṇḍa eva kiṃ dehavirāmaḥ kriyate tvayā ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 39, Sloka 22

"Oh, Saintly Man! Think of the goddess of your kingdom. Think of your body. Why do you want to wither away your body for nothing?

"You may think that the body is of no use citing the Upanishadic aphorism that as long as the body exists, feelings of likes and dislikes do not fade away.

न ह वै ससरीरस्य प्रियाप्रिययोरपतिरस्थि

na ha vai sasarīrasya priyāpriyayorapatirasthi

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

"That is a mistake. How can you, who have no feelings of what is desirable and what is undesirable, be linked to the likes and dislikes existing in the body? Come on, get up !

"You have to be alive with the present body till the end of the present Kalpa. That is the Law of Nature. It has to have its course. We are aware of it. You must have to live in this body till the end of Kalpa as a liberated person and rule the kingdom without emotional upsurges. Your body has been designed accordingly when it was created.

"It is not yet time for the end of Kalpa. So please do not give up your body.

"Let me tell you. It is reasonable if a totally ignorant person with a disturbed mind suffering from unlimited sorrows were to die. It is better that an excessively greedy person or a person of excessive lust and anger dies. Why should a wise person like you end his life ?

"What is death after all? If one leaves the body, it is termed as death. Actions do not exist for Self, which is ever existent (*sadrūpi*). Leaving the body is also an action. How can an action of leaving the body be attributed to Self ?

"If Self has to disconnect itself from the body, it implies that there was a prior connection with the body. Self is always unattached. Furthermore, the body is non-existent. How can there be a linkage for an existent 'you' with an non-existent body? If there is no connection for the 'existent you' to start with, how can you break the non-existing connection to leave the body ? Hence it is impossible for you to die.

"Prahlada ! It is, therefore, venerable that a wise person firmly established in truth and whose mind does not stray away from the Supreme lives on. It is, therefore, reputable that an egoless person with equanimity towards all and whose intellect is not swayed by anything lives on. It is, therefore, auspicious that a person, whose presence or name or even thinking about who brings joy to the neighborhood, lives on!

"But what does it mean to be alive? One is said to be alive if you continue to see his existing body. If he leaves the present body to acquire a new one, we call it death. Do you possess this body ? Do you have a desire to get another body ? The answer is no for both questions. In such a case, how can you live or die ? You have neither death nor living.

"A mirror reflects the objects that come in front of it. If the object moves away, the mirror loses the reflected image. The mirror is attached to neither the object nor the reflection. It has no likes and dislikes. Liberated persons who have understood Truth function similarly without love or hatred. They are awake in the knowledge of Self; they are asleep in worldly affairs.

जाग्रति स्वात्मनि स्वस्थाः सुप्ताः संसारसंस्थितौ ।
बालवत्प्रविवेपन्ते सुषुप्तसदृशाशयाः ।।

jāgrati svātmani svasthāḥ suptāḥ saṃsārasaṃsthitau |
bālavatpravivepante suṣuptasadṛśāśayāḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 40, Sloka 24

" Prahlada, you should enjoy ruling over the kingdom in the nether world till the end of the present Kalpa. After that, experience the everlasting salvation without a body."

"Being happy listening to the lengthy harangue of Lord Vishnu, the corporeal body called Prahlada responded as follows:

"My Lord! I was tired of analyzing what is good and what is bad. I just had a wink out of fatigue. With your compassion, I have reached calmness in or out of deep meditation (*samādhi*). I see you in my meditation. I see you outside my meditation. I did not meditate because of sorrow or for fulfillment of desires. Renunciation, a wish to leave the body or a fear of the world is not the reason for my meditation. Surely I have some problems in my kingdom. But they are external issues. I am alone. I do not possess a body. There is no bondage for me. There is no annihilation for me either. I have no fears and at the same time I am not fearless. Hence none of them are the reason for my meditation. A desire for rest grew in me out of my introspection. Hence I went into meditation.

"Esteemed Sir, some people want to leave the world because they are disgusted. It speaks poorly of their intelligence because such a thought does give them a bit of happiness and a little sadness and produces some transformation in them. Only foolish persons are troubled by the pathetic thought that difficulties come with the body and in the absence of a body there would be no difficulties. 'I am happy with this, I am unhappy with that, I have this, I do not have that and similar thoughts torment only the fickle minded unwise people but not learned persons.

"Revered Sir! I did not take up *samādhi* out of any such fears. I rested within my *Self* for a short time while making a natural enquiry into who was the seer and what was it that was seen. I did not entertain in that state any inner feelings (*bhāva*). It was not that I was without any inner feeling. There was nothing I had to get or give up. Coming out of *Samadhi* too I feel the same way.

"Lord, I shall do what is dear to you.

"You are beautiful with eyes like petals of a lotus. You are venerated in the three worlds. By nature, I am a devotee. Therefore, I wish to worship you. Please do accept my worship (*pūja*)."

"With the permission of Lord Vishnu, Prahlada performed an elaborate ritual of worship to the Lord. On completion of the worship, Lord Vishnu addressed Prahlada as follows:

Vishnu: "Prahlada, King of Demons! Come on over and occupy the throne. I shall myself coronate you. All the angels and gods accompanying me will also participate in the celebrations."

"Hosts of gods from all nooks and corners came along to participate in the coronation ceremony. At the end of the function, Lord Vishnu blessed Prahlada, with these words:

इष्टानिष्टफलं त्यक्त्वा समदर्शनया धिया ।
वीतरागभयक्रोधो राज्यं समनुपालय ।।

iṣṭāniṣṭaphalaṃ tyaktvā samadarśanayā dhiyā |
vītarāgabhayakrodho rājyaṃ samanupālaya ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 41, Sloka 32

"Rule the kingdom without fear or favor and without love or hatred, with equanimity towards all. Perform your duties as per the needs of the time. When you execute your job, keep your mind free of likes and dislikes or any ill feelings. May the demon citizenry be free of troubles in your reign! May your rule be free of wars between the gods and demons! May you enjoy ruling the country for a long time !!"

"After granting several boons and receiving farewell from Prahlada, Lord Vishnu left for His abode along with his retinue. Indra, Lord of gods in Heaven and Prahlada in the netherworld lived happily from then on."

Sage Vasishta closed the story of Prahlada with the following remarks:

Vasishta: "Rama, you also emulate Prahlada and rule the kingdom after attaining liberation through Self introspection. Undoubtedly men who recite this event of Prahlada's union with the Supreme Self will be redeemed of their sins of past seven births."

This statement provoked Rama to raise a question.

13. Residual Impressions of jīvanmuktas

Rama: "Revered Teacher ! You said earlier that there was no difference in the blissful happiness of a person liberated while alive and the one who obtained salvation without the body. If that is the case, it is impossible for a liberated individual to come out of his *samādhi*. After all, nobody wishes to forego the eternal bliss and move away from the Cosmic Consciousness. Further you said that Lord Vishnu sounded his conch when Prahlada deserted all his sensory organs having merged in the Supreme. How is it possible for Prahlada who lost contact with his senses to hear the sound of the conch and come out of *samādhi* ?

Vasishta: "Liberation is of two types. One is with the body and the other is without the body. Liberation with the body and Liberation while alive mean the same. They are free of the three "*desires (of wife, children and wealth).*" Life still throbs in them. If the person dies in that state, it is called liberation without the body. Those who obtain liberation without body will not appear again in the world.

"But persons who are liberated in this life, though free of the three 'desires' and rebirth, are still left with a few meritorious impressions. They are undoubtedly left with specifically the pure and pious impressions of contemplation on the Supreme Self. Hence just as a sleeping man wakes up some time or other, those that achieve liberation while living do come back into worldly affairs, maybe after a thousand years. When they thus come back, they come along with the residual impressions. Prahlada too woke up with the residual impressions. That is how liberation while alive works.

"Your next question was how a person could hear the sound of a conch even though he was free of sensory perception. That could happen because of the thought power of Lord Vishnu. Who do you think Lord Vishnu to be ? He is nothing but the Supreme Brahman, the Cosmic Consciousness.

आत्मन्यकारणेनैव भूतानां कारणेन च ।
सृष्ट्यर्थं वपुरात्तं हि वासुदेवमयात्मना ।।

ātmanyakāraṇenaiva bhūtānāṃ kāraṇena ca |
sṛṣṭyarthaṃ vapurāttaṃ hi vāsudevamayātmanā ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 42, Sloka 20

"There is only one thing in the universe that is neither caused by anything nor causes anything. That is the Supreme Self. The causal force for all the creatures is only one. That is called the Undifferentiated (*avyākrutam)*. When reasons like desire, action etc. mix with the Undifferentiated, Pure Consciousness creates a body within itself all by itself. It does that for the sake of creating the world. Lord Vishnu is the form assumed by Pure Self (Consciousness) within itself for the sake of creation. Therefore, Lord Vishnu appears before him whoever seeks the Pure Self through a philosophical inquiry. Whoever gets the audition of Lord Vishnu will be able to see his Pure Self automatically. That was the reason why Prahlada had the benefit of seeing Lord Vishnu in the form of Narasimha. He could realize the Self because of that. He could see Lord Vishnu again later. With the thought wave of Lord Vishnu, Prahlada's sensory systems started to work again and were able to hear the sound of Vishnu's conch.

"The moral of the story is that you should also cultivate a similar attitude and achieve Self-realization."

Rama: "I have one more doubt. Some time back you said in another context that Self realization is possible only with human effort. If that is true, how could Prahlada obtain Self-realization without any of his effort but merely by the grace of Lord Vishnu?

Vasishta: "You cannot say that Prahlada did not make any effort. He did make an effort through austerity (*tapas*). His effort fructified. The appearance of Lord Vishnu served as a doorway. So there is no violation of the principle that liberation is not obtained without human effort.

"You may question the possibility of attaining Self-realization through worship of Lord Vishnu. It's all the same whether we refer to Self, Lord Vishnu or Sri Hari. Gingelly seed or gingelly oil is the same. Whether you refer to whiteness or a white cloth, it is all the same. Fragrance and the flower are the same. Whoever is Vishnu, He is Self. To put it straight, like chicken and hen or cow and milch-cattle, Self and Vishnu are synonymous.

"Self in the form of Vishnu introduced Prahlada to devotion. Devotion led him to Self-introspection.

नाविचारवतो ज्ञानं दातुं शक्नोति माधवः
मुख्यः पुरुषयत्नोत्थो विचारः स्वात्मदर्शने ।

nāvicāravato jñānaṃ dātuṃ śaknoti mādhavaḥ
mukhyaḥ puruṣayatnottho vicāraḥ svātmadarśane |

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 43, Sloka 10

Lord Vishnu too cannot bestow a boon of liberation on some one who does not make Self–inquiry. The foremost way for Self-realization is through human effort of Self inquiry. Boons and other benevolent things bestowed by Lord Vishnu are secondary. So concentrate on Self-inquiry, which is the main path for liberation. Make full effort towards that.

शास्त्रयत्नविचारेभ्यो मूर्खाणां प्रपलायिनाम् ।
कल्पिता वैष्णवी भक्तिः प्रवृत्त्यर्थं शुभस्थितौ ।।

śāstrayatnavicārebhyo mūrkhāṇāṃ prapalāyinām |
kalpitā vaiṣṇavī bhaktiḥ pravṛttyarthaṃ śubhasthitau ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 43, Sloka 20

"Fools give up performance of meritorious acts and rigorous self-inquiry having failed in a proper study of scriptures. Devotion to God has been devised to bring such people back on to the auspicious track. The principal guidelines for liberation are study of scriptures, performance of good deeds and Self-inquiry. When such a strategy is found to be difficult, the lesser method of worshipping God etc. is recommended.

"Devotional approach is branded as inferior because it involves within it a stipulated ritualistic practice. The ritual has an underlying assumption that there is a superior God different from what we are and a ritualistic worship connects us to Him. Thus a triad (we, God and worshipping) gets introduced. Therefore, the devotional approach is considered inferior.

"Of what use is the worship if the worshipper is lost in his sensory experience? When a person is not overpowered by his sensory experiences, what does he gain by performing any worship? After all, the main aim of worshipping is to conquer sensory desires.

For one who has conquered senses, there is no significant benefit from worship. Lord Vishnu cannot, in fact, be obtained without an enquiry into Self and subjugation of senses. Once you possess these two, you do not have to bother with the form of Vishnu with attributes. So Rama, achieve these two.

"It is also better that worshippers appreciate one important point. They pray as if Vishnu is somewhere out there. He is, strictly speaking, right within our hearts. People who leave Vishnu residing right within them and pray to a distant Vishnu are despicable. The truth is that Pure Consciousness existing inside the heart of creatures is Vishnu's prime form. The embodied form with four hands holding a conch, mace, wheel and a lotus flower is secondary. A person worshipping the secondary form leaving the primary form is equal to a man who goes to plough a field to grow grain forsaking the immortal nectar poured into his own palm.

"The sum and substance of all this is that a person incapable of linking directly with the Self may go for worshipping the Supreme Lord. He may also perform very demanding austerities or follow other rigorous methods. A methodical convergence of them all leads his mind to stability. A stable mind will help him achieve liberation.

"I mentioned earlier that Prahlada fulfilled the obligatory responsibilities expected of a human being through performance of austerities. As a result of this, Lord Vishnu bestowed a boon to him. Because of this boon, he could obtain necessary strength for Self introspection. Self-introspection led him to the pristine state of the Supreme. Hence there is no flaw in what I said. Truth is reached only through an effort by human beings.

"Rama! Control of mind alone leads to success whether one follows a spiritual approach or observes physical practices. There is no other short cut for success. Leave the external form of god perceived by senses; leave the internal effulgence experienced by mind; contemplate only on the formless Consciousness. This is the way to obliterate future births.

"The root cause for the misconception of man is illusion. Control of mind is the sole means to demolish illusion. I shall narrate an interesting story to show how beguiling is an illusion for creatures in the world."

With these introductory words, Sage Vasishta embarked on relating the story of Gadhi Brahmana.

The story of Gadhi Brahmana, as already remarked, constitutes the central theme of the entire Chapter of The Calm Down. A few short stories have been narrated already. There is only a nominal storyline in them. Sage Vasishta's commentary, however, extended each time to hundreds of verses.

The material covered so far constitutes the backdrop for the main story of Gadhi Brahmana. Several methods to attain Self- realization have been described from the beginning of the chapter till now. Devotion towards an entity with and without attributes was discussed at the end. Finally in order to explain Maya (the essence of illusion) which is the biggest obstacle to attaining wisdom, Sage Vasishta narrated the story of Gadhi Brahmana in the following words. We shall now take up this exciting and most meaningful story.

14. The story of Sage Gādhi

Vasishta: "Rama! A noble person by name Gādhi lived in a country called Kosala. I am not referring to Sage Viswamitra's father. He was a different Gādhi. Gādhi of our story was a Brahmin and an orthodox one at that. He had had no interest in worldly things right from his childhood. He renounced everything in his prime age and escaped to a forest for meditation. He came across a beautiful lake in the forest. Because of the effect of meritorious deeds done by him during his past lives, he was propelled to observe austerities in this life. He meditated standing in neck deep waters of the lake continuously for eight months.

"Pleased with his austerities, Lord Vishnu appeared before him. Sage Gādhi was overjoyed and respectfully worshiped Him. Lord Vishnu asked Gādhi to express what he wished for. Gādhi stated his desire in the following words:

मायामिमां त्वद्रचितां भगवन्पारमात्मिकीम् ।
द्रष्टुमिच्छामि संसारनाम्नीमान्ध्यैककारिणीम् ।।

māyāmimāṃ tvadracitāṃ bhagavanpāramātmikīm |
draṣṭumicchāmi saṃsāranāmnīmāndhyaikakāriṇīm ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 44, Sloka 13

"Lord! I want to understand illusion. Illusion is created by you, is dependent on you and appears as this world of life and death. It blindfolds everybody. It has been an enigma ! I am unable to understand it however I may think about it. I want to witness what illusion is. Please grant me this wish."

"Lord Vishnu was very happy at this request. He assured Gādhi, "You shall witness the illusion created by me! No sooner you comprehend it you shall transcend it ! Amen!"

So saying the Lord disappeared.

"Gādhi was quite pleased. He concluded his meditation and climbed ashore. He built a cottage in the forest and lived in it. He was anxiously looking forward to the day of fulfillment of the Lord's words. He was constantly thinking about illusion. His whole focus was on witnessing illusion. Days went by. Years had gone by. But his wish was not fulfilled.

"One fine morning as he proceeded for his bath in the lake, he was besieged by intense thoughts of illusion. He was very desperate to witness it. Somehow, he could compose himself and commenced the ritualistic ablutions in the pond. As ordained in the scriptures, he held Cogon grass (*darbha*, Botanical name: *Imperata cylindrical*) in his hand. He was making circles with it in the waters uttering mantras along with the sound of Aum as per the custom.

"The movement of Cogon grass in the water looked like the circling of a big whirlpool. The sounds of Aum produced a twister in the atmosphere. In the ensuing melee, somehow, Gādhi mispronounced the mantras. He went blank. His body became frigid. The body froze like a pillar in the lake. But surprisingly, his mind continued to experience strange phenomena.

"He felt that he was not in the lake but was in his cottage. He appeared to be seriously sick. His face developed black patches. Eyeballs were not moving. He was unable to breathe. He was fainting. Suddenly all his childhood friends and relatives appeared from somewhere and gathered around him. They were crying. His wife was weeping uncontrollably. She fell down on his feet. His mother was inconsolably crying. She was trying to move his head while holding his chin.

"In the midst of all this commotion, Gādhi felt that his limbs turned limp. His body felt cold. His mouth gaped open. His life was coming to an end. Nay, his life ended ! His body was a mere corpse. Some of his relatives were still crying while others made arrangements for the funeral. They carried the body to the graveyard. Kites, crows and foxes were ready to devour the corpse. His relatives drove away the birds and animals. They put the body on the funeral pyre and lit it.

"That was it. Everything ended. His body was in ashes. But strangely his experience continued. All the relatives who participated in the funeral bathed to cleanse themselves. With difficulty they controlled their sorrow and left for their homes. After the body was burnt away, the *jīva* (individual in the body) of Gādhi suddenly appeared in the womb of a lady of the hunter community living in a godforsaken village. He could not understand how he could witness himself. He felt like a dung beetle in a dump of refuse. He appeared to be fidgety and fussing around and anxious to come out of the lady's womb."

"After the due gestation period, he did come out. The baby was charcoal dark. He grew up to be a teenager. He attained sixteen years. He went to the forest with hunting dogs. He killed thousands of beasts. He found a suitable young bride and married her. He was enjoying life with her without a care.

"He became famous as a courageous person in his community. He begot children and they too had grown up and were respected in his tribe. He became old. He became infirm. For some reason, he left his wife and children. He started living alone in a small hut on the outskirts of the village. After a few days, he was unable to bear his solitude. He felt that he would die soon. He was scared of the thought of death and began crying. He could not live alone any more. Full of sorrow, he wandered around different places.

"Presently he entered a big city of wealthy people in the country known as Kīra. Ugly and cruel looking Gādhi was roaming around the main avenue of the city without any aim or purpose.

"He noticed that many people were crowding the streets in a celebratory way. But strangely none was looking happy. There appeared to be a lot of confusion. He could not discern what sort of celebration it was. A huge elephant was freely moving on the main avenue. It held a garland of flowers in its trunk. It moved in all directions and tried to approach the crowds. People were giving way to the elephant but were not running away from it. Nor was the pachyderm harming any person. The whole thing looked very surprising indeed.

"The elephant slowly came towards hunter Gādhi. As it came close to him, the old and frail Gādhi shuddered. While he was scared and trembling with fear, the elephant drew closer to him and put the garland on his neck. It lifted him gently with its trunk and seated him on its back.

"There was a sudden uproar. The Royal drums sounded and bugles were played. The entire crowd clapped. The place resounded with cries of victory.

"The fact is that the pachyderm was from the Royal court. The king of the country had died. He did not have any children or heirs for the throne. Therefore, as per their tradition, the ministers let the Royal elephant out onto the streets with a garland of flowers in its trunk. It is the local custom that whoever would be decorated with the garland by the elephant would be crowned their king. That was the function that was being held at the time Gādhi visited the city.

"The elephant's action transformed hunter Gādhi to a King. Royal servants and lady aides came running to him. They brought him down gently from the back of the elephant with great respect. They decorated him fittingly and dressed him in royal clothes.

"Ministers, Pundits and other nobles of the court took him to the palace most respectfully and seated him on the throne. Coronation was done. He was crowned the King. In no time, the frail hunter Gādhi became a great brave King. He ruled over the land with an iron hand. He won wars over other countries. He was known as King Gavala, the Great. He enjoyed life thoroughly. Eight years went by.

15. A Disrupted Dream

Vasishta (continuing with Gādhi story) : "Whatever it was, after all a hunter's temperament would be that of a hunter ! He felt uncomfortable with all the flashy garments and pompous ceremonies. He was weary of the synthetic dignity and stiff palace routines. The artificial behavior was totally unbearable to him. One fine day he threw away all the ornamentations and Royal insignia. He even removed his shirt. He came out onto the street doing cat-stretches.

"As he was enjoying himself thus, to his misfortune, he met with a group of hunters. The people in the group were fully inebriated. They were singing intoxicatedly. King Gādhi felt as if he found his long last cousins. He heartily joined them in the singing.

"An old person in the group recognized Gādhi. The person was unable to contain himself. Boisterously he shouted in his native tone, "Aye, Katanja! How come you are here!"

"Katanja had been his name a long long time ago. The hunter King, now a respected His Highness, did not like the old man addressing him with that long forgotten name. Unconcerned the old man, however, continued with his prattle.

"Aye Katanja! Has our King employed ye 'cause he liked your singing? Does he treat you well ? Do they give ya what you want?"

"King Gādhi was totally annoyed with the unwanted conversation. He fretted and fumed. When he looked around he discovered that they were in the street where the Minister's bungalows were located. Huge mansions stood on either side of the street. Many of the officials and Ministers were watching the scene on the road from their windows on the upper floors. They could make out that King Gavala, the Great was after all a hunter and belonged to an unworthy low class. They felt ashamed.

"King Gavala assumed a serious face and walked quickly back to the palace. Everybody in the palace looked at him as if he were an untouchable corpse. They did not respond to his calls. They did not even come near him.

"The word spread around the kingdom like fire. People were disgusted that an undeserving person from the lower class of society was crowned king. They regretted that they paid obeisance to and were in the service of such a king. They felt that their entire lineage was defiled and tarnished by their acts of supplication. They desired to initiate some remedial measures. Some of the more emotional lot including a few ministers were unable to bear the insult and committed suicide by jumping into burning pyres. The entire kingdom was turbulent, uncertain and confused.

"Though he had been a mere hunter, he spent the past eight years as King Gavala in the association of cultured persons and nobility of the court. As a result of this association, a new line of thinking took root in him.

He felt that he was responsible for the disorder and death of so many noble persons. He decided to end his own life rather than continue living hearing the abuses heaped on him. He proceeded straight to a burning pyre in front of his palace and jumped into it.

"Just as the King jumped into the fire with a thud, Maharshi Gādhi who was standing like a rigid post in the lake tottered with a jolt. He was jerked out of his stupor. He shook his head. Rubbed his eyes. Soon he was his normal self. He felt as if he had just woken up from a deep slumber, conscious and alert back again. He mused within himself, "I am Gādhi. I am a Seeker (*sādhak*). I am a well-read person duly observing the ritualistic ablutions and other prescribed actions. Being a hunter king or ruler of the country Kīra is definitely not my cup of tea."

"*sādhak* Gādhi finished his bath and dragged himself out of the lake. However, a stream of thoughts continued to haunt him and trouble him.

Gādhi:

कोऽहं किमिव पश्यामि किमकार्षमहं किल ।
एवं विचारयंश्चित्रं सभ्रूभङ्गमभूत्क्षणम् ।।

ko'haṃ kimiva paśyāmi kimakārṣamahaṃ kila |
evaṃ vicārayaṃścitraṃ sabhrūbhaṅgamabhūtkṣaṇam ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 47, Sloka 7

"Who am I? What is it that I see? What is it that I am doing?" He was thus totally lost in deep thoughts with knotted brows.

"How is it possible? When did I see my parents? I cannot even remember seeing them. They passed away much earlier than I was of the age to register things in my mind. How could my parents appear to me now?

"Furthermore, how could my wife weep for me? I was never married nor did I accost any lady at any time. I cannot recollect any of my relatives. I never cared for any of them when I stayed in my village. How then can my parents, my wife and kids and relatives gather around my deathbed? How was it possible that I die in the midst of all of them? What is all this but a phantasmagoria? The entire thing is a creation, an aberration of my mind. It is an illusion, a hallucination. There is no truth at all in this. Just like a tiger in passion roams around in the jungle, the mind of an individual (*jīva*) lives in illusion. One need not be concerned by such illusions or delusions."

Having decided thus, Gādhi proceeded to his abode.

16. Dream Proved to be True

Vasishta (Continuing with Gādhi story): "A few days rolled by. One day a sage visited him in his cottage. It was rare to have visitors in a forest. So Sadhak Gādhi invited him with due respect and treated him as a revered guest observing the prescribed formalities in honoring a guest. Both of them observed religiously the daily routines of worship etc. They ate a limited supper consisting of some fruits and roots. They retired to sleep early stretching themselves on floor mats.

As both of them were busy with their own respective protocols of worship, they did not have much of a chance to chitchat during the day. Moreover, great sages are usually very reticent. So just for the sake of courtesy, Sadhak Gādhi, while formally bidding goodnight, enquired of his guest:

"Great Sage! How come you look so tired and debilitated?"

"The guest responded letting out a huge sigh, "Yes. It is true. I shall speak the truth as you were kind to ask me. While wandering on a pilgrimage, I reached the country Kīra. The people of that country looked after me with a lot of respect. Tempted by their hospitality, I stayed at a Brahmin's place for over a month. One morning my host looked very sad. I queried him for the reason of his sadness. The Brahmin narrated the story as follows:

"My Guest! Please do not misunderstand me. Recently a hunter, a butcher, feigning to be a Brahmin ruled over us as our King for eight years. We worshipped and served him falling at his feet. Finally his true colors showed up. About a hundred of the rigorous Vedic Brahmins could not take it and gave up their lives by jumping into burning fires. I couldn't commit suicide. So I am very desolate and depressed."

"I was quite upset by the shocking words of my host. I deeply regretted having partaken food for a whole month from such a despicable house in such a corrupted country. Immediately I left the place for Prayag (where the three sacred Rivers Ganges, Jamuna and Saraswati were supposed to meet) and had a holy dip at the confluence of the three rivers to wash away my sin. Still not satisfied with it, I performed the special worship of **कृच्र चन्द्रायन** "*kṛcra candrāyana*" three times. As you may be aware, the worship requires the performer to observe very strict fasting. Upon the completion of the three rounds of fasting, I wished to complete the balance of my worship at a pious location. So I came to your place today. I am sanctified by eating the modest offering of fruits and roots by you. So you can understand why I look so weak. It was because of the strict fasting."

"*sādhak* Gādhi was taken aback by these words. He made searching enquiries from the guest through elaborate questioning. The responses of the guest matched every one of his experiences to the dot. Undoubtedly, the guest was speaking of the same kingdom Kīra that he felt he ruled. There was no scope for any misgiving.

"*sādhak* Gādhi was terribly worried. He could not sleep at all though his guest was fast asleep. Soon it was daybreak. The guest took leave and left. But Gādhi was in deep anguish.

"How is it possible? My Brahmin guest was establishing what I thought had been a hallucination of mine, an illusion, nothing but magic, to be true. Was my experience really a sheer phantasm of mine? Or was it an imagination on the part of my Brahmin guest? Could it be that I really died? But experiencing my own death can't be true; I need not doubt this. Still I have a feeling that I witnessed my own death. I also have a feeling that I am alive. What is the truth? I have got a feeling of having been the King of Kīra. I cannot deny this fact of experiential feeling in me. Was the feeling merely an imagination on my part? Did it not truly happen? How am I to decide? I should go personally and verify the ground truth. It is no good relying on mere words of the Brahmin guest."

Having thus decided, Sage Gādhi took the road to Kīra as per the directions provided by the guest. After a long and strenuous journey, he reached the country, Bhūtamandala. He went to the hamlet where he was supposed to have lived as a hunter. He was nonplussed. True, it was the land and it was the hamlet and he could find the very hut where he had lived. He had a sense of déjà vu looking at all the things. He could not decipher what was real and what was imaginary. He was swinging between belief and disbelief. His mind was in a denial mode.

तेनैव संनिवेशेन प्राग्दृष्टं श्वपचास्पदम् ।
तस्य कामपि वैराग्यपदवीमनयन्मनः ।।

tenaiva saṃniveśena prāgdṛṣṭaṃ śvapacāspadam |
tasya kāmapi vairāgyapadavīmanayanmanaḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 47, Sloka 44

"*sādhak* Gādhi looked at things in a detached manner in a state of ambivalence.

"Incessant rains washed away the mud plaster on the walls of the hut (where he lived) giving a patchy look. A few walls had weeds growing on them. The roof of the hut collapsed. He could see pieces of his old torn mat scattered around. The skeletal remains of various animals all over inside as well as outside the hut betrayed who lived there - undoubtedly a hunter who devoured raw meat. He did not find any people living there. So he left that place and went to a neighboring hamlet. He found a few people there. He enquired from them about Katanja, whether Katanja became the King and other relevant particulars. They answered his queries in detail. They substantiated everything he thought he had experienced. The names were the same; the faces were the same; the places were the same; the events were the same; even the dates and days were the same. Whatever he experienced in his imagination tallied exactly with what they said.

"Gādhi conducted his investigations for a whole month. He questioned the villagers from different angles, comparing the descriptions of one with that of another. There were no differences in the story. As he probed deeper, more unfailing evidence came up. He was out of his wits.

"Gādhi then proceeded to Kīra kingdom. He resumed his detailed enquiries here also. His research continued for twelve years in that land. He questioned several people, persons of different backgrounds and so on. Nobody spoke anything contrary to what he experienced. Clear artifacts of everything he experienced - people, places and things - were there.

"Gādhi was deeply agonized by what he found. He was mad that he was unable to make any sense of it. His thoughts ran somewhat as below:

Gādhi's thoughts: "What is the state I am in? It looks as though I am witnessing one of my past lives. It is as though the dream of the previous night appeared as reality the next morning. What is this magic? Who is the magician? Why does one play this trick on me ? What a pity ! Like a bird trapped in a hunter's net, I am helplessly being swept away in the flow of continuous mental imagination losing my freedom and independence. My mind is driven by the impressions of past births. Maybe because of the influence of the impressions from past births, I am weaving up these scenarios within me like a little child"

"Aha, I can now recollect!

एषा हि माया महती तेन मे चक्रधारिणा ।
दर्शितेत्यधुना साधु मया स्मृतमखण्डितम् ।।

eṣā hi māyā mahatī tena me cakradhāriṇā |
darśitetyadhunā sādhu mayā smṛtamakhaṇḍitam ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 48, Sloka 34

"This entire thing is the magic of Lord Vishnu. He created all this to show me what illusion is. I shall sit right now in a cave and focus my mind on understanding how the illusion was generated and how it is sustained."

17. Which Part was Reality and Which Part was Fancy ?

Vasishta (Continuing Gādhi story): "*sādhak* Gādhi entered a cave in the nearby mountains, deeply meditated on Lord Vishnu for a year and half. He survived the entire period taking nothing but for a single sip of cow milk each day. Lord Vishnu was pleased with his determination and devotion. Lord Vishnu appeared before him and addressed him as follows:

Lord Vishnu: "Oh Gādhi! You desired to witness my illusion. So you noticed it. By now you must have deduced that the entire visible universe is nothing more than an apparition. It is not a real and substantive thing. Why do you perform deep meditation even after the fulfillment of your wish? What is it that you seek now?"

"*sādhak* Gādhi was overwhelmed looking at the pleasantly smiling face of Lord Vishnu. As per his wont (because of the inexorable impressions of his past deeds), he went on adoring Lord Vishnu in different ways without giving Him a chance to speak. He took up ambulatory gyrations around Him staring at Him with full contentment. At last he said:

Gādhi:

देव यैषा त्वया माया दर्शिताऽतितमोमयी ।
महीं प्रातरिवादित्यस्तां मे प्रकटतां नय ।।

deva yaiṣā tvayā māyā darśitā'titamomayī |
mahīṃ prātarivādityastāṃ me prakaṭatāṃ naya ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 48, Sloka 44

"Lord ! Yes, you did show me your *māya* (illusion). I could understand to some extent that it was all your play. But it was too dense to comprehend. I could not distinguish between black colored earth and white colored space in that impenetrable darkness. Nor could I decipher the veil covering up both the earth and space. I am unable to figure out anything unless you rise up and point to me clearly and distinctly the illusion, just as the sun shatters the darkness of night. Please do show me the illusion plainly.

"Lord! You may wonder what all the fuss is about. True, it is a fuss. Chains of unknown past impressions tangle my mind. My mind saw many bizarre scenes. What I saw did look like a dream. There was no possibility for any truth to exist in my dreamy experience. But then, I witness those very scenes back again while I am wide awake. How is it possible, My Lord?

"It would not have been more than a few seconds of a dream I experienced while I was bathing in the lake. My mind had gone into some trance. But within that short interval of time, I spent almost eighty years of life as a hunter. Where are a few seconds of dream and where is a lifetime of eighty years !

"You may say that it was entirely some hallucination in my mind. You may question my presumption concerning rationality about the length of time in a fantasy.

"True. In such a case the time duration, my birth in the hunter community, my death and ashes of my cremated body should have been confined only to the domain of my mind, if they were my hallucinations. How could they get reflected into this physical world and my wakeful state crossing the realms of mind? How do they happen to appear here directly?"

"Listening to the doubts expressed by *sādhak* Gādhi, Lord Vishnu replied as follows:

Vishnu:

गाधे स्वाधिविधूतस्य स्वरूपस्यैतदात्मकम् ।
चेतसोऽदृष्टतत्त्वस्य यत्पश्यत्युरुविभ्रमम् ।।

gādhe svādhividhūtasya svarūpasyaitadātmakam |
cetaso'dṛṣṭatattvasya yatpaśyatyuruvibhramam ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 48, Sloka 48

"Gādhi! As you yourself said, your mind is filled with the impressions of your past lives. That is the reason why your mind is unable to comprehend the essence of Truth. That is why you get these fantasies. The root cause for the illusion is your mind itself.

"Gādhi! You say that what should have been confined within the mind appeared outside the mind. You speak as if there is one world in your mind and a different one outside !

बहिर्न किंचिदप्यस्ति *bahirna kiṃchidapyasti*

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 48, Sloka 49

"There is not an iota of matter outside your mind. The boundless sky up above, the solid earth below and the mighty oceans around are all within your mind. It is like the foliage of a large tree being coded within the seed that is the cause for them. Just as trunk, bough, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits appear to have emerged out of the seed and appear to be separate from one another, the five elements (*panchabhūtas* – fundamental constituents of all matter) seem to have emerged out of your mind.

"As a matter of fact, the trunk, stem, branches, leaves and so on did not emerge from the seed. The seed has transformed itself into all of them.

रूपालोकमनस्कारतत्ताकालक्रियात्मकम् ।
कुम्भकारो घटमिव चेतो हन्ति करोति च ।।

rūpālokamanaskāratattākālakriyātmakam |
kumbhakāro ghaṭamiva ceto hanti karoti ca ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 48, Sloka 52

"What is present **now** is perceived by the senses. What will be in the **future** is anticipated by the mind by its projection. What was **past** is remembered by the mind by identifying itself with the past things/events. Therefore, it can also be said as:

"Present Time **रूपालोककाल** *rūpāloka kāla* Period of Direct Observation (Perception)
Future Time **मनस्कारकाल** *manaskāra kāla* Period of Mental Projection (Anticipation)
Past Time **तत्ताकाल** *tattā kāla* Period of Mental Identification (Remembrance)."

"Thus the three times viz., Present, Future and Past are nothing but what the mind makes up like a potter churns out pottery. It is again the mind that makes them disappear.

"All of this is a fact of everyone's experience. It is common knowledge that the mind plays a profound role in our dreams and fantasies, or when we get inebriated with intoxicants, or when we are depressed as a result of excessive desire, or in our diseases of psychosomatic kind.

"As long as a tree has its roots firmly embedded in the soil, it grows flowers and fruits. Similarly, as long as the mind stays rooted in impressions of past births, literally hundreds of thousands of events will flourish in it. If a tree is pulled out of the soil with its roots, it cannot bear any more fruits or flowers. Likewise if the mind is freed of the impressions, the individual (*jīva*) will not be reborn.

"Is it any surprise if you were shown to be a hunter by the great illusory phenomenon (*māya*) that contains the entire unending web of universe within itself ? Under its influence, you had the illusory experience of being a hunter. The arrival of a guest, his dining with you, staying with you and narrating stories of his experience to you, are all modifications of your own mind in the form of your imagination.

"Not only that. The confusion in your head after listening to the story of your guest, your departure from your hut, your arrival in the country of Bhutamandala, the people giving you evidence, your visit to Kīra, the citizens of Kīra telling you that a hunter had been their King and all other experiences that you had had were totally your imagination!

It was entirely a magical maze that you were caught in. It is also a characteristic of this illusion that you think a part of it to be true and another part as imaginary.

एवं सर्वं त्वया दृष्टं मोहजालं द्विजोत्तम ।
यत्सत्यमिति जानासि यच्चासत्यमवैषि च ।।

evaṃ sarvaṃ tvayā dṛṣṭaṃ mohajālaṃ dvijottama |

yatsatyamiti jānāsi yaccāsatyamavaiṣi ca ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 48, Sloka 62

"Dear Gādhi ! Is there anything that a mind tangled in impressions cannot sculpt? What is it that shows you within a few minutes in your dreams events that take several years? Is it not your mind?

"Gādhi, Oh Intelligent One! I am explaining once again. There was no guest. There was no forestland known as Bhutamandala. There was no Kīra kingdom. Nor were there any people as witnesses. You did not directly perceive the places. None of them were True. Therefore, raise, Oh Great *sādhak*. Calm your mind. Proceed with your daily ablutions.

न स्वकर्म विना श्रेयः प्राप्नुवन्तीह मानवाः ।।

na svakarma vinā śreyaḥ prāpnuvantīha mānavāḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 48, Sloka 69

"Howsoever learned may be a human being, everyone should perform the obligatory functions for his/her welfare."

"Lord Vishnu appeared, preached to him and disappeared suddenly after speaking those words. Gādhi was quite happy at this. Nonetheless a nagging doubt still remained in his mind. His agony did not cease. He continued to be anguished.

"The Lord said that everything that was witnessed was nothing but an illusion. How does it jell ? Would the Lord speak untruth? But then, if what He spoke is Truth, why am I still in a state of ambivalence - feeling that a part of my experiences was real and another part was unreal?" His mind went in circles with many thoughts coming to him like the changing shapes of a drifting cloud. Gādhi was unable to resolve the dilemma. So he decided to have a recheck.

"I shall go over and revisit all the places which appeared real to me at that time. If I find those places again, my experience of being a hunter King should be taken as real as the mountains and rivers around here or the stars above."

"Losing no moment, Gādhi set out on his journey. He went to Bhutamandala, the hunter hamlet, Kīra kingdom etc. He made enquiries all over again. He compared the places, people and events of his experience. There was no doubt. The places were the same. The people were the same. And so was the evidence. Gādhi could not make out. His head reeled.

Gādhi thought, "When I notice everything so crystal clearly, so solidly, how is it that the Lord dispenses it as mere imagination? How am I to convince myself that it was only my imagination? Lord Vishnu is not a person that would lie. There is no need for him to speak untruth. Not a word of falsehood comes out of His mouth. Should I trust my own eyes or should I believe His word? Gādhi could not any more stand the impasse. He returned to his cave and meditated vigorously for Lord Vishnu.

18. Was not my Dream Exclusively Mine ?

Vasishta: "Soon Lord Vishnu appeared before him. Gādhi was a bit calm this time around. He was happy that the Lord appeared before him. The Lord too appeared to be compassionate.

Lord Vishnu (asked curtly) : "Why are you meditating again? Why do you want me once more? What do you expect from me further?"

Gadhi : "Lord! It looks as though my hallucinations are on the rise. You said that my entire experience was an illusion. I revisited the lands of Bhutamandala, Kīra kingdom and other places for about six months. I gathered evidence from many more. The entire evidence is leading to the same thing. If my experiences were only an imagination of mine, I alone should have been the witness to it. But everybody in those places experienced the very same things. All of them speak of the same events. I investigated for twelve years in the past. Now during my second visit too, I found the same picture. Can so many of the direct perceptions of so many persons be termed a mere fantasy? How is it possible to consider your word not to be true ? How am I to say that my experience was not true ?

मोहनाशाय महतां वचो नो मोहवृद्धये ।।

mohanāśāya mahatāṃ vaco no mohavṛddhaye ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 49, Sloka 6

"Lord ! The words of Great Persons like you should clarify rather than confuse people like me", Gādhi appealed in desperation to the Lord.

"The Supreme Lord, God Vishnu explained then in the following words:

"Gādhi! Your question was how it could be unreal if a thing had been experienced by many people. You think that it couldn't be an imagination. Well, one has to first of all understand what illusion is.

केनचिच्छ्वपचेनान्ते ग्रामस्य रचितं गृहम् ।
तत्त्वया दृष्टमाविष्टमिष्टकाखण्डतां गतम् ।।

kenacicchvapacenānte grāmasya racitaṃ gṛham |
tattvayā dṛṣṭamāviṣṭamiṣṭakākhaṇḍatāṃ gatam ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 49, Sloka 9

"A hunter had put up a hut in the outskirts of a village hamlet. You happened to notice it by chance. For some reason it made a permanent mark on you. The mark was so indelibly engraved, so strongly impressed that that hut of long lost time appeared right in front of you now. How are you able to perceive it so directly now? Where did the bricks and other material of the hut come ? You yourself have become the brick there, **"त्वया इष्टका खन्दतां गतं"** "*tvayā iṣṭakā khandatāṃ gataṃ!"* You have become the rafters, the thatch and other parts or in short the total hutment. The force of the impression in your mind did not end there. Staring at the hut appearing in front of you, you claimed ownership to it, **"तत् त्वया दृष्टं आविष्टं"** *"tat tvayā dṛṣṭaṃ āviṣṭaṃ".* You became the owner, the hunter. You even entered it.

"That's how your fantasy began. When once a fantasy commences, it will not end until and unless nescience which is the root cause of illusion gets exterminated by some other specific reason.

प्रतिभासो हि नायाति पुनरप्रतिभासताम् ।।

pratibhāso hi nāyāti punarapratibhāsatām ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 49, Sloka 8

"Until nescience ends, your illusion looks as real to you.

"You experience such a fantasy every day. You call it a dream. Your dream is personal to you. Simply because the fantasy experienced by you in a dream has been your private affair, you assume that your illusion cannot be seen by another. Consider it a bit further.

"Say four friends had gone to a beach in the evening. They saw a nugget of silver at some distance. All the four approach it eagerly. A close examination revealed that it was just an oyster shell. Had not the same fantasy occurred at the same time to all the four of them ?

कदाचित्प्रतिभैकैव बहूनामपि जायते ।
काकोलतालस्थितिवद्विचित्रा हि मनोगतिः ।।

kadācitpratibhaikaiva bahūnāmapi jāyate |
kākolatālasthitivadvicitrā hi manogatiḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 49, Sloka 10

"Your mind literally jaywalks in a disorderly way, obeying the Doctrine of Spurious Correlations (**काकतालीय न्याय** *kākatālīya nyāya)*. Hence you cannot argue that your fantasy is yours alone.

"The Doctrine of Spurious Correlations can be illustrated as follows: There was a palm tree with a very well ripened fruit that was about to fall off. A crow happened to chance upon the fruit and approached it. Just as the crow was alighting on the fruit, it (the fruit) detached from the tree and began its descent.

Without knowing this fact, the crow thought that the fruit dropped down because of its own (crow's) weight. It was the crow's imagination. But several people watching from below also thought the same way. Thus they also suffered the same illusory perception. Therefore, sometimes several people can experience the very same illusion simultaneously. We cannot rule this out.

"You think that your dream is your own private affair. This is a presumption on your part and a very shaky one at that. It is quite possible for several people to have the same type of dream. Suppose a group of people gather at a place and get fully drunk . They will feel drowsy at the same time and in that drowsiness may feel that the hills surrounding them are going round in circles. Is it not a type of dream occurring to all of them at the same time?

"Many children play in the sand building castles and temples. They play boisterous games labeling their constructions as the palace of the King, abode of God etc. Is not the pleasure out of the play an imagination? Is it not the same fantasy taking place at the same time in the minds of all the children?

"Fawns (young ones of deer) prance around happily in a grass meadow. Though what they actually eat may not be much, they are smug looking at the large grassland thinking that they have so much good food available for them. Is this not one common illusion for all of them?

"Gādhi ! Strange and identical illusions may arise to a number of people at one time. Because of the commonality of the illusion, all of them run after the same end result. For example, thousands of soldiers fight a war with the same fervor. What is it other than a common illusion to all of them?"

"Gādhi seeking a clarification at this point interrupted the harangue of Lord Vishnu.

Gādhi: “Pardon me, My Lord! You insist that every event, every thing in the world is a phantasm, a creation of the mind. It is quite puzzling to me. Certain things take place in the world as per the Law of Nature regularly on time. For example, paddy crops get affected if the season is too cold; but that may suit certain wild cereal crops better. It is well known that what prevents good yields of paddy or what helps the wild grains are the seasonal variations. If it is taken that the entire world is nothing but a figment of imagination, how can there be a rule or rhyme to it? How can any Law of Nature be valid? Any crop can be grown or destroyed at any time just by imagination. But it doesn’t happen that way. The world certainly seems to revolve around a time frame. How is it possible to attribute it to something fancy ?”

Lord Vishnu:

विप्र संकल्पमात्रोऽसौ कालो ह्यात्मनि तिष्ठति
अमूर्तो भगवान्कालो ब्रह्मैव तमजं विदुः

vipra saṃkalpamātro'sau kālo hyātmani tiṣṭhati ||
amūrto bhagavānkālo brahmaiva tamajaṃ viduḥ |

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 49, Sloka 15

“You talk of time. What is after all time? There is a force that is detrimental to paddy but congenial to the wild grains. Do you think it is time? Even such a force is a figment of your imagination. Let me explain. Your mind is the one which conceived the four directions. Based on the directions, your mind calculates the motion of the sun. The motion is calibrated into daytime, nighttime, 24-hours, weeks, months, years and so on. Then you build up formulae based on these labels. Don’t you see that the whole system is nothing but a creation of your mind?”

Gādhi: “Not really, My Lord! Time is an experience. A true experience at that ! I have been able to measure and classify it in terms of days, months and years because ‘Time’ exists. The measure could be my invention. Speaking in technical jargon, splicing time scales into finite intervals can be my mental work. But behind these divisions is an infinite indivisible Time. This Time is not my creation. It cannot be a construct of my mind.”

Lord Vishnu: “Where does such an infinite Time exist ? On what platform does it reside? Because you said that it was not conceived by your mind, your mind cannot be the substratum for it. Because the Time exists prior to finite time divisions, it cannot be a function of the movement of sun and moon and hence should precede the sun and the moon. If none of these is its cause, what is left? Only the Supreme Consciousness superseding everything ! Therefore, it has to be agreed that Time is embedded in the Supreme. That is the reason why I said that “Time resides in my Self”, ‘**कालोह्यात्मनि तिष्टति**’ ‘*kālohyatmani tiṣṭati*’

“But there is no scope for having segments within the Supreme. Hence that Time which you are referring to must exist as the Supreme within the Supreme. In other words, it amounts to saying that Time is the Supreme Consciousness or Time is another name for the Supreme. If Time is Supreme Consciousness, it will not be an impediment to paddy or any other thing. Nor will it favor wild grains or some other thing. We will have no quarrel with such a Time.

"The time scales dependent on the motions of the sun and moon are the creation of mind, sun, moon and other related issues. Gathering further strength, the seasonal times create the paddy or other crops. The entire format is based on your mind. It is a creation of your mind. Hence it is a mistake to attribute Reality to the world based on such units of time scale.

"Coming to the point under discussion, it is quite possible that identical fantasy may occur coincidentally to a number of people in this world. That's what had happened to you, to the residents of Bhutamandala and Keera kingdom. Hence, all of you had experienced the same events. The coincidence gives strength to envisage them to be real.

"Gādhi ! I explained to you in detail what all I could. Now you decide for yourself what to do. Mull it over again and again in your mind. Get rid of the illusion that you are caught in by yourself. Bye for now." So saying, Lord Vishnu vanished abruptly.

Vasishta: "Gādhi's head reeled. The problem continued to torment him. He pursued his analysis like a mad cap. Unable to come to a logical conclusion, he took recourse to performing austerities once again towards Vishnu. Soon Lord Vishnu reappeared. Gādhi duly worshipped Him.

"The Lord did not speak. So Gādhi himself initiated the discussion imploringly.

19. Was it a Dream or Magic ?

Gādhi: "I am getting mad thinking and thinking about my life as a hunter and the magic (of illusion) spun by you. Therefore, Lord, please clearly tell me the final thing. Please do not disappear just like that. Do stay over until I am clear in my head and the illusion gets lifted. Kindly depart only after setting me on the proper path."

Lord Vishnu: "Great Sage! Please follow this carefully. The entire world is no more than a panorama of illusory magic. There is only one single reason for illusion. That is your forgetfulness. Forgetting the essence of your Self! Amnesia about Self-knowledge is the root cause – the reason for the experiences of you, the people of Bhutamandala and the Keera kingdom. Let me reveal the secret.

"Once upon a time in a small village in Bhutamandala, a hunter by name Katanja was born. He did become the King of Kīra. He did die by jumping into burning coals. His life history struck your mind as you were bathing in the lake.

द्रष्टानुभूतमप्यर्थं कदाचिद्विस्मरत्यलम् ।
कदाचिदप्यदृष्टं तु चेतः पश्यति दृष्टवत् ।।

draṣṭānubhūtamapyarthaṃ kadācidvismaratyalam |
kadācidapyadṛṣṭaṃ tu cetaḥ paśyati dṛṣṭavat ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 49, Sloka 31

"The mind forgets completely sometimes things that were seen, heard or experienced by itself. Strangely, the mind shows things that were never seen or experienced previously as if they had been actually seen or experienced earlier giving a feeling of déjà vu.

"Suppose a Yogi sees a stream of future events with his power of clairvoyance. At the time of looking at any succeeding event, each preceding individual event appears as past. Though the entire stream is in the future, a preceding event does appear to him as past at that point of time. In a similar way, future events can seem to be a current occurrence for a person with an illusory outlook.

"Same thing happened to you with respect to the story of Katanja. There would have been no problem if you had witnessed the story just as a story. But you got immersed in it, got involved in it. The main reason for the involvement is that you are not aware of your True Self. A person with Self-knowledge does not identify himself with anything. He does not entertain the feelings of "me and mine." One who lacks Self-knowledge identifies himself with his inert body (the gross body, **देह** *deha*). He develops a quality of possessiveness for inert things like residence, lands, property etc. Who can set any rules for an ignorant person stipulating that he could identify himself with certain things and not with certain others when he indiscreetly claims identity with any thing and every thing? A stone in the hand of a lunatic can land anywhere; likewise his claims of identity are random without a rule or rhyme. Sometimes, he may identify himself with his current body and some other time he may identify with the body of another.

"In your case too it happened the same way. Your mind thought of the life story of Katanja. It is your mind that attributed identity to you with the body of Katanja. It gave to you the possessive quality of claiming Katanja's wife, children, property, kingdom and so on as your own ! Remembrance of the life story of Katanja and the possessive feelings of "Me and Mine" occurred simultaneously. Being enmeshed in both, you failed to witness the story of Katanja as an outsider. On the top of it, you began to own it!

"The main reason for the entire episode of forgetfulness is lack of knowledge of who you truly are."

Gādhi: "Lord! Does a Self-knowing person not go through such an illusory experience?"

Lord Vishnu:

सर्वमेवाहमेवेति तत्त्वज्ञो नावसीदति ।
न गृह्णाति पदार्थेषु विभागानर्थभावनम् ।।
तेनासौ भ्रमयोगेषु सुखदुःखविलासिषु ।
न निमज्जति मग्नोऽपि तुम्बीपात्रमिवाम्भसि ।।

sarvamevāhameveti tattvajño nāvasīdati |
na gṛhṇāti padārtheṣu vibhāgānarthabhāvanam ||
tenāsau bhramayogeṣu sukhaduḥkhavilāsiṣu |
na nimajjati magno'pi tumbīpātramivāmbhasi ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 49, Sloka 35-36)

"Who is a self-knowledgeable person ? Whoever has an experiential understanding that every substance in this world in essence is himself/herself is such a person. Possessed of this knowledge, he/she will not fragment the world into one part as "Me and mine" and other parts as "Not me and not mine." He knows that fragmentation leads to corruption and causes turbulent fluctuations in happiness. Who knows this, will not go through the cycles of birth and death.

"A person who identifies himself with a tiny little part of the world like the body or mind is called "Compartmentalized I-ness." Compartmentalized I-ness is detrimental to a man.

"The thinking that "everything in this world is me" also connotes I-ness. It is called "Holistic I-ness or Infinite I-ness or Uncompartmentalized I-ness." A person with this holistic I-ness is not overcome by the illusory world, though he may apparently look like he has been affected. Suppose a boy is seated on a large calabash in a pond. The gourd shell might look like it had gone down in water; but it will not let the boy drown.

"A person who transcends the state of "Holistic I-ness" and achieves merger with the transcendental Supreme Self, does not even appear to have been affected by the worldly illusion. One who knows the essence of Truth will be in such a state."

Gādhi: "Sir, What is my state?"

Lord Vishnu: "You are neither fully a worldly man nor fully a knowledgeable person. You are vacillating in-between. Impressions from past births dwell in your mind. The good news is that you have not surrendered to them. Your condition is like that of a convalescent recovering after very serious illness shades of which are still present. You have some knowledge. But it is not perfect. Hence you are unable to resist the onslaught of fantasies. Your position is like that of a person who is unable to escape rain, as he could not get the roof of his house repaired.

"If a very tall person takes shelter under a short bush to escape from summer heat, the shadow of the bush can hardly save him. On the contrary, his shadow falls over the bush. Similarly, your mind has been too big for you. Its thoughts are engulfing you.

"Gādhi! *māya* (illusion) is like a wheel. It is spinning all the time. It rotates around its central point. The center of the wheel of Maya is your mind. If you hold the center tight, the turning of the wheel stops. Likewise if you firmly steady your mind, the illusion disappears."

Gādhi: "What is the technique to do that, Sir?"

Lord Vishnu: "Observance of austerities is the way. Do not feel discouraged. Be brave. Continue deep meditation (austerities) for ten years in this cave. You will obtain infinite Knowledge."

"Lord Vishnu vanished uttering those words.

Vasishta: "At the onset of Fall season plants lose sap. Similarly with the grace of the Lord shining, the flux of thoughts diminished in Gādhi. With a spirit of renunciation, he entered the cave, arrested his mind, rejected all thought movement and meditated for ten years without a break. In the end he obtained perfect Self-knowledge. He had the experiential understanding of the essence of Truth. He was liberated right in that life (*jīvanmukta*) and spent the balance of the life-period peacefully."

"Rama! You have heard the life story of Sage Gādhi. You can appreciate how unimaginable, how confusing and how widespread is the illusion that manifests itself based on the Supreme Consciousness! That is why I stress again and again that this illusion is very detrimental. However, it can do no harm to those who are focused. It imperils those who cannot concentrate their minds and pushes them into constant problems."

Rama: "How can one halt the spinning wheel of *māya* (illusion), My Teacher ?" I am aware Sage Gādhi too raised this question. Lord Vishnu's advice was to observe austerities. But how does one arrest it when *māya* spins around so fast, shattering every limb that comes in contact with it?"

20. Gādhi's Story Revisited

It is evident from the above query that Rama had no questions on the story *per se* of Gādhi's life. He, therefore, was more specifically enquiring about the ways and means of ridding oneself of the illusory perceptions. Before we enter into this dialog, let us review the salient issues discussed in the long story of Gādhi.

In Leelopakhyana, (the story of Leela), an individual (*jīva*) witnessed dual worlds of objects and their reflected images (vide Yoga Vasishta, Book 3 of this Series, Utpatti Prakarana (Chapter on Creation)).

In Lavanopakhyana (the story of Lavana), King Lavana witnessed the same scenes that he had seen in his dream later on after he woke up (ibid).

In Bhargavopakhyana (the story of Bhragava), we noticed that the great Teacher, Sukra cremated his own body (vide Yoga Vasishta, Book 4 of this Series, Sustenance).

The above three stories combined together constitute Gādhi's life history.

Why did Sage Vasishta resort to repeating what was already narrated by concocting a new story from an admixture of three earlier stories? A careful look reveals a well-thought out purpose behind this plan.

Sage Vasishta opened the Chapter on The Calm down (Upasama) with a discussion on the obligatory daily ritualistic routines. He defined the purpose of the current chapter to be an exposition on calming down the mind. He followed it up narrating the stories of King Janaka, Emperor Bali and Prahlada in order to illustrate the fact that Self-knowledge could be attained through many different ways. Later he himself raised the issue of *māya*, Illusion which is the root cause for the cycle of births and deaths. Why did he raise the issue of *māya*,?

A seeker's quest culminates in the attainment of Knowledge of Truth. But what is it like in the beginning stage of a seeker (*sādhak*)? What techniques are to be followed in the initial stages? Sage Vasishta planned to expound on these issues. It is necessary to have clarity about the goal to be reached before getting into a detailed discourse on the methods to be followed. So he intended to bring together at one place various tidbits of discussions on *māya* covered thus far. Adept storyteller that he was, he crafted a new story like a new hand dealt by an expert card-dealer reshuffling the same old cards. The new story is about Gādhi's life.

In the story of Lavana, a magician dispatched by Indra hypnotized the king. Lavana became unconscious, missed his way, got lost in jungles and lived the life of a hunter tribesman. Regaining his consciousness, he went back in search of the places where he roamed as a hunter. To his surprise, he found all those places to really exist. Explaining how this could be possible, Sage Vasishta said in Book 3, Utpatti Prakarana (Origination):

विस्मरत्यपि विस्तीर्णां कृतां चेतःक्रियां यथा ।
तथा कृतामप्यकृतामिति स्मरति निश्चितम् ।।

vismaratyapi vistīrṇāṃ kṛtāṃ cetaḥkriyāṃ yathā |
tathā kṛtāmapyakṛtāmiti smarati niścitam ||

Utpatti, Prakarana, Sarga 121, Sloka 23

"Our mind forgets the very actions done by it. This is a common experience to all. In the same token, it is quite possible for the mind to evoke actions it never did as if it had actually done them."

It was clarified there that some prince really was lost in a forest, lived with a woman of the hunter tribe and had children from her and that memory got transplanted into that of King Lavana through the hypnosis of the magician. A similar explanation is being provided here in the story of Gādhi too.

भवतः केवलं चित्ते जलान्तर्वर्तिनस्तदा ।
प्रतिभाता तथाभूता कटंजाचारसंस्थितिः ।।

bhavataḥ kevalaṃ citte jalāntarvartinastadā |
pratibhātā tathābhūtā kaṭaṃjācārasaṃsthitiḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 49, Sloka 30

"A long time ago a hunter tribesman by name Katanja became the king of the country, Kīra. His entire history got reflected in your mind."

Is there any difference between the two stories? Not in the detail but, yes, in narration.

In the story of King Lavana, the magician was instrumental in the transfer of memory from one to the other. What was responsible for the exchange of memory from Katanja to Gādhi?

Can we say that Lord Vishnu caused the memory transfer through His magic ? No, we cannot attribute it to the magic of Lord Vishnu. The magic or illusion that is created by Lord Vishnu, the Supreme, permeates the whole world. That is the fundamental cause for the illusory world. Therefore, we cannot invoke it as a reason uniquely for Gādhi's malady.

The experience was sudden and unexpected (in Gādhi's case) while he had been bathing in the pond as part of the ritual of daily worship. Within a short span of a few minutes of unconsciousness, he experienced eighty years of life as a hunter tribesman. Every one of us too is familiar with this sort of experience during our dreams. We reject such experience as untrue and consider it as mere fantasy. At the same time, we fail to easily accept when Vedantins tell us that the visible world is nothing more than a phantasmagoria, a dream. There are two reasons why we do so:

1. Incongruity of Time and Place:

The duration of my dream may not extend beyond ten minutes. The duration of my dream life within that time may, however, extend to several years. I am resident in my own house and have not left my bed during the period of dreaming. But the events in the dream may be anywhere in or outside my house.

Thus, looked at from the point of space or time, the dream-life could not have taken place and therefore cannot be true.

2. Non-Commonality of Experience:

I am the only witness to the story of my dream. There is no second person who can attest to my dream. If the story of my dream is real, whoever enjoyed happiness or misery along with me in my dream should also have had the same experience. They must be able to attest to the veracity of my dream. But no other person can stand up to give evidence.

Therefore, my dream experiences cannot be true.

Because of the above two reasons, we hold that our dreams are not real. The events of our wakeful state satisfy the above two tests. We do not have any events that are unrelated to time and space during our wakeful experience. There is a commonality of experience for all people in the wakeful state and hence they can stand to attest an event. Hence our wakeful state cannot be unreal.

Whether it is a dream or any other experience, we employ the above criteria to test the authenticity of its reality. We do not have a third criterion. Judged according to these two criteria, we have to rule that the experiences of Gadhi were not real.

However, we are up against another problem. There is no scope for any person to witness the cremation of one's own body and experience its burning to ashes. Maybe some specially gifted advanced Yogis could have such powers, we do not know. But for sure Gadhi cannot be called a yogi of such a high caliber.

He saw his non-existing wife, non-existing children and his long lost mother whom he hardly remembered. He witnessed his body going to ashes. Even then he continued to feel that he existed. He was not clear how he reached the womb of a tribal hunter woman, but he felt that he himself existed in her womb.

In the Bhargava story, Sukra obtained a new body by the strength of his imagination. After a long time, he went back to his old body, re-entered the old body using his yogic powers. He used his old body to set fire to the new body on a funeral pyre. This sounds like some hocus-pocus magic. Rama also expressed doubt on the genuineness of the story. Sage Vasishta explained it away saying that some of the very noble persons of a past Kalpa (4.32 billion earth years), being born at the beginning of a new Kalpa would have supernormal lives and they would not conform to the usual Laws of Nature.

We cannot invoke any such supernatural reasons to explain the case of Gādhi. He was an ordinary *sādhak* (seeker). He experienced the burning down of himself to ashes. Though he did not possess a body, he felt that he existed. He also had the experience of existing as an embryo in the womb of a lady somewhere in a remote village. It was neither entirely like a dream nor a reality. How do we classify this experience that is neither reality nor falsehood ?

Gādhi was lost in confusion for some time. He decided that his experience in the lake was a ramification of what he heard or read in some books. He considered it as a dream and settled down. But then a saintly guest arrived, providing physical evidence for what he thought was a dream experience. This confused Gādhi. A witness was now available for an experience which he thought was a dream. Consequently one of the two criteria we had for assessing an experience as real or otherwise floundered.

The other criterion about Incongruity of Time and Space (a few minutes of standing stiff in the lake being equivalent to 80 years of dream life) was the only one available to establish that his experience was not real.

If one of the criteria validated and the other invalidated, should we consider an experience to be real or unreal? This was the struggle Gādhi had faced. And here lies the difference in the stories of Lavana and Bhargava on one hand and that of Gādhi on the other.

Lord Vishnu assured Gadhi when He appeared first that Gādhi would witness His illusory phenomenon and when once he witnessed it, Gādhi would be free from it. Gādhi lost his balance of mind after gathering evidence for six months from the forest area and for another twelve years from the Kīra kingdom. He decided at one point that it could all perhaps be Lord Vishnu's doing (illusion). We are not sure if this amounted to saying that Gādhi witnessed an illusion. But one thing was certain. He was not freed from illusion. So he observed austerities and meditated again. Lord Vishnu appeared again. He Himself told him that it was His illusory phenomenon. Still Gādhi was not free of illusion!

Gādhi went back to collect facts. He was pained to conclude that what Lord Vishnu said was not true. So he meditated again. Lord Vishnu confused him further , saying that Gādhi's illusion was not confined to merely his visions in the lake while bathing, but also further to his assumption that he was freed of illusion, his thinking that a guest saint visited him, his thinking that he visited different places to gather evidence on the ground and so on. The Lord added that the entire thing was part of the illusion that he experienced in the lake.

Gādhi was speechless. Momentarily he concurred that it had to be the Truth. But illusion won over him. His mind was disturbed. He agonized. He resumed his analysis. He meditated once more and sought Lord Vishnu's help. This time the Lord came up with a different explanation. He said that the story of Katanja did really take place. The Lord added that the memory of that tale reflected in Gādhi's mind, it was a meme! (Meme is a replicator to propagate thoughts, concepts, and belief structures like a gene does for genetic traits). Hence, it was a dream-like vision as far as Gādhi was concerned. But it was real as far as Katanja was concerned.

The Lord clarified, "What you were able to verify was a part of the truth of what happened to Katanja. This is not equivalent to saying that you verified the truth from the people who were associated with you in your experience. Please understand this. Katanja's story took place recently. But it's water that has gone down the bridge. It has no existence now. But it occurred as a memory, a meme in you. Therefore, the people whom you saw in your memory were not the actual people of Kīra kingdom. What you saw in your vision were their representations, reflections. After you came out of your hallucination, you visited Kīra Kingdom and conducted your enquiries. You saw the people there and mistook them to be those whom you met in your lake vision. Whom you saw in your vision were images. Whom you met in Kīra kingdom were real people. You were unable to differentiate the two. The evidence you gathered was from real objects. What they narrated was the local objective story. They matched with the stories of your imagination. You think that they are identical. You are unable to understand that they belong to two parallel worlds of objects and their reflected images. This is the reason for your anguish."

It may sound to us that Lord Vishnu had changed His stance! But Gādhi did not have such a doubt. After all, he was a better seeker than what most of us are! Lord Vishnu explained the root cause for the totality of Gādhi's visions in the lake and the sum total experiences up to collecting evidence. He explained the hidden reason for Gādhi's experiences to be the strength of past impressions. Therefore, we may not interpret it as a shift in His stand.

Gādhi seemed to have been convinced. But the Lord felt it was enough of an explanation. The Lord said that though it might sound logical for the moment, fresh doubts could arise as the Illusory phenomenon was so very sticky. Therefore, He disappeared asking Gādhi to meditate for another ten years and purify his mind.

Sage Vasishta introduced us to the 'object – image' world in the second Chapter on Creation (Utpatti) while discussing the story of Leela. He talked about two worlds – Padmaraja kingdom and Viduratha kingdom. He showed us the illusions of Padmaraja and Viduratha. The same set of ministers and nobles appeared to be present in both Padmaraja kingdom and Viduratha kingdom. Padmaleela could reach the Viduratha world with the help of Goddess Saraswati. There she saw her entire retinue. She suspected that her entire staff died in her world and reached Viduratha kingdom. So she returned to her own world for verification. She got her ministers, other nobles and staff assembled in her court. She found that they were all alive. Padmaleela concluded that the kingdoms of Padmaraja and Viduratha were two parallel worlds like mirror reflections.

Gādhi was in a similar situation. In the story of Leela, Leela had to travel beyond her own world to another world in her subtle body and had to take the helping hand of Goddess Saraswati in order to get this experience. However, Gādhi did not have these advantages. He was in his ordinary gross physical body. He continued to be in the familiar everyday world of his. He wandered around and witnessed two parallel worlds all by himself. He thought they were identical and constituted one world. He was unable to realize that he witnessed two worlds and there was a difference between them.

Sage Vasishta intended to convey that realization about the truth of parallel worlds could not possibly be obtained through the divine gift of a boon. Hence he invoked Lord Vishnu three times over and finally made him say that, "The essence of this Truth cannot be understood until one performs austerities and purifies one's own mind." But Gādhi had been performing austerities and deep meditation. Were the austerity and meditation performed by Gādhi improper then? No, the austerity and meditation were quite proper. But he performed them with a specific objective, to obtain a specific boon. Such meditation purifies the mind only to a point. Therefore, observance of austerity and meditation specifically aimed at purification of the mind are essential. This is the implication of the last statement of Vishnu.

It is to convey this significantly profound message that the descriptions of parallel worlds in Leela's story, cremation of one's own body in Bhargava's story and magical hypnotism in Lavana's story were knitted together by Sage Vasishta into one single story of the life of an ordinary human being, Gādhi. This is the essence of Gādhi's story. It provides a cue for us about the nature of the everyday wakeful world of ours !

The two criteria that we invoke to establish the reality of our wakeful world - viz. (i) Proper relationship in time and space and (ii) Availability of multiple witnesses for an event – stumble in the light of the current discussion. We also face the inescapable possibility that the so-called fellow witnesses of ours, our fellow beings in our world, may be actually participants living in a parallel imaginary world!

Gādhi experienced an awareness of continued existence even after his body was reduced to ashes. What we perceive through our senses when we have the body is described by us as the wakeful world. What shall we call the world when our body does not exist but awareness continues? This is the second question that stares us in our face.

The above questions may be inadequate to convince us that the so-called wakeful world of ours is a fiction like a dream world. But they definitely raise a doubt on the reality of the wakeful world. The crux of Gadhi's story is that the final realization of the unreality of the world dawns on us only after the mind is purified through ardent observation of austerities and meditation.

Finally let us have a look at the way the characters of the story were christened. The hero of the story was Gādhi. *gādha* in Sanskrit stands for 'shallow land'. It is symbolic of a shallow mind. The name Gādhi indicates a person with a shallow mind. That is the reason Lord Vishnu had to preach him so many times. Gādhi's meditation was also quite shallow like a small pond. Thus the name was quite appropriate to the story.

The hunter tribesman was called Katanja. *Kata* in Sanskrit means a corpse and also a graveyard. Katanja is derived from *"Katam anjati iti"* meaning one who is connected to a graveyard or corpse. This name too was quite appropriate because Gādhi saw his form in the womb of the tribal woman immediately after his body was burnt in a graveyard.

The place where Katanja lived was Bhutamandala. Bhutamandala in Sanskrit means synthesis of the five fundamental elements (fire, earth, water, wind and space). The central question in this story was whether Katanja's body was made up of the five elements or was it purely imaginary? He was made a king in the Kīra Kingdom. *Keeram* in Sanskrit means parrot. A parrot mouths words without understanding their meaning. The people of Kīra selected a king following an illogical procedure. When Gadhi was the king of Kīra, he was called Gavala. *Gavala* in Sanskrit means a he-buffalo. A wild he-buffalo. From his form and level of intellect, the name suited him. Thus we find that the characters have names that are very contextual and have an implied inner meaning.

Rama could very well infer the entire inner meaning of the story. Hence he did not raise any questions on the story. He focused his discussion on "meditation" advised by Lord Vishnu towards the end of the story. In order to clarify these issues with a critical re-appraisal of Gādhi's story, we digressed slightly from the main narration.

21. Control of Mind is True Meditation

Let us now join Sage Vasishta's discourse from where we left it. Recalling the important question raised by Rama:

Rama: "How can one halt the spinning wheel of *māya* (illusion), My Teacher?" I am aware Sage Gādhi too raised this question. Lord Vishnu's advice was to observe austerities.

But how does one arrest *māya* when it spins around so fast, shattering every limb that comes in contact with it?"

Vasishta: "Yes, the question was raised by Gādhi. Lord Vishnu answered it too. The Lord advised rigorous meditation. He himself explained what comprises rigorous meditation. Do you remember the response of the Lord ?

चित्तं नाभिः किलास्येह मायाचक्रस्य सर्वतः ।
स्थीयते चेत्तदाक्रम्य तन्न किंचित्प्रबाधते ।।

cittaṃ nābhiḥ kilāsyeha māyācakrasya sarvataḥ |
sthīyate cettadākramya tanna kiṃcitprabādhate ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 49, Sloka 40

"If the Illusion is a great wheel, its center of rotation is your mind. The spokes radiating from the center join together at their ends to form the circular rim of the wheel. Touching a wheel anywhere with a finger will break the finger. If you slowly bring the finger from the circumference to the center, the finger is unharmed. If you hold the center tight, the rotation of the wheel itself stops!

"You are adept at fighting in wars using wheel shaped weaponry. When the enemy throws such a weapon at you, do you try to stop it holding its rim? Do you try to hold the spokes? No. You try to catch it straight at its center. Then the wheel stops. So is the case with the wheel of Illusion.

"What does the center of the wheel do? It turns. It rotates the spokes and the rim of the wheel. Your mind too spins and rotates you also. So in order to arrest the speed of the wheel of Illusion, you have to observe meditation that helps stop the mind. That was the advice of Lord Vishnu. What does it actually mean?

तस्माद्राघव संत्यज्य तीर्थदानतपःक्रियाः ।
श्रेयसे परमायान्तश्चित्तमेव वशं कुरु ।।

tasmādrāghava saṃtyajya tīrthadānatapaḥkriyāḥ |
śreyase paramāyāntaścittameva vaśaṃ kuru ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 50, Sloka 13

"You desired to arrest Illusion. Lord Vishnu clearly expressed the path for it. Therefore, stop all the austerities like pilgrimages, alms-giving, worship, fasting and so on and meditate on controlling your mind. That is the only way to attain the Supreme state. I emphasize this because, according to Lord Vishnu:

चित्तान्तरेव संसारः कुम्भान्तः कुम्भखं यथा ।
चित्तनाशे न संसारः कुम्भनाशे न कुम्भखम् ।।

cittāntareva saṃsāraḥ kumbhāntaḥ kumbhakhaṃ yathā |
cittanāśe na saṃsāraḥ kumbhanāśe na kumbhakham ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 50, Sloka 14

"Just as a pot contains a limited amount of 'potful of space', the entire world is contained within the confines of the mind. If the pot is broken, the 'potful of space' does not exist anymore. Likewise, if the mind is annihilated, the world itself does not exist.

"When the pot breaks, the form of the pot does not survive. That is to say the space bound within the limits of the walls of the pot does not survive. What remains is the totality of space. Similarly, when the mind disintegrates, the world and its form do not exist any longer; what remains will only be Supreme Consciousness.

"You may think that by holding the center called mind firmly, the mind might stop spinning but the mind may not disappear totally. There is no scope for such a doubt because what moves only is the mind. If it is stable and unmoving, it does not mind at all!"

Rama: "Does that amount to say that learned persons knowledgeable of the essence of truth have no mind at all?"

Vasishta: "There will be a mind. But the impressions of past lives carried over in it get destroyed by the knowledge of Truth, like seeds burnt out by application of heat. As a result of this, they do not experience desires, happiness and sorrow, attachment and fear and other pairs of opposites. Study of scriptures, association with noble people and following the path of yoga are necessary to obtain this state. So Rama, please secure these three and control the movement of your mind by yourself."

Sage Vasishta's preaching went on this way for about 85 verses in the 50th Sarga. From the 64th verse, the meter of the verses was changed. Written with lyrical beauty, Sage Vasishta described the mind as a snake, an eagle, a monkey, a lasso and even as a sharp sword. He called it derogatively by many other names. Finally, he said:

चित्तेन चेतः शममाशु नीत्वा शुद्धेन घोरास्त्रमिवास्त्रयुक्त्या ।
चिराय साधो त्यज चञ्चलत्वं विमर्कटो वृक्ष इवाक्षतश्रीः ।।

cittena cetaḥ śamamāśu nītvā śuddhena ghorāstramivāstrayuktyā |
cirāya sādho tyaja cancalatvaṃ vimarkaṭo vṛkṣa ivākṣataśrīḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 50, Sloka 84

"Just as a Mighty Weapon (*brahmāstra*) of Rajasic type launched by the enemy is repelled with the *brahmāstra* of *sātvic* type, the mind corrupted by worldly illusion should be crushed with the help of pure mind. It is a slow process. You should not stop in-between under the mistaken impression that you reached the end. After a prolonged continuous effort, you will obtain stability in Knowledge-based deep meditation (*jnāna samādhi*). As a result, the mind would be free of its vacillating quality. You would become quiescent like a tree from which the monkey has just exited. You would be calm without any perturbations."

Sage Vasishta taught in that way for a specific reason. His advice thus far to Rama had been to observe yogic practices in order to obtain a steady mind or to dissolve the mind. However, he had not spelt out clearly what the yogic methods were. Sage Vasishta intended now to begin instruction on specific yogic methods of achieving perfect control of mind.

So, he opened up the 51st Sarga with the story of Sage Uddālaka.

22. Story of Uddālaka

Vasishta: "Rama! Conquer your mind through practice, wiping out the five fundamental elements emulating Sage Uddālaka. I shall tell you his story.

"Once upon a time there lived a saintly boy by name Uddālaka. He performed austerities and meditation beneath an Indian Mulberry tree (Botanical name: *Morinda sp*.) on the Gandhamādana mountain range. He developed detachment at a very early age. He had some scriptural knowledge too. With the wisdom gained thus, he left the forest hamlet where he lived and embarked upon meditation all alone.

"Uddālaka had not by then yet achieved complete Knowledge of Self. He had grit and determination and possessed a blemishless mind. He was quite intelligent and logical. So he progressed quite fast in his pursuit of Self-knowledge.

With increasing knowledge, however, he paid more attention to logical analysis than to meditation. He used to compare and contrast scriptural statements using logical principles and contemplate on the essence of Self all by himself, anxious to get beyond the cycle of births and deaths and to attain *Nirvikalpa samādhi*. His mind used to resist his attempts. Still he did not give up and pursued his goal with full determination towards deep meditation (*Nirvikalpa samādhi*).

"In course of time, the influence of external objects on him waned. His craving for worldly things reduced and desire for transcendental life took root. Rejecting that desire too with discretion, he continued his practice. He was able to focus his mind on the final objective without wavering. With constant meditation, he had visions of brilliant reddish light like that of the rising sun. Texts on Yoga declare that visions of fog, shades of sunlight, twinkling lights, lightning, crystals, shining moons etc. are indicative of imminent Self-realization. Soon enough, Uddālaka too began to experience an occasional taste of the essence of Supreme Consciousness.

"Unfortunately, his mind suddenly rebelled. Just like a bird running away when the net of a hunter was about to catch it, his mind escaped hither and thither frightened by the impending lights of Self-illumination. Uddalaka used to pull it back to concentration. But his mind struggled to sneak out at opportune moments. Under these conflicting conditions of pull and push, his mind could not either be fully spiritual or be totally materialistic and used to be caught up in mid-ground. Sleep is the stage that lies between the resplendent and illuminating spiritual world and the avaricious and ignorant illusory world.

So Uddālaka's mind used to be lost in sleep for a long time. He had to struggle a lot in bringing the mind back into a meditative state from sleep.

"Oscillating in between meditation and sleep, his mind became vulnerable to the impressions from previous births. It developed a desire for worldly objects remembering long lasting things. As a result, he could not meditate any more and began wandering around the forest like a lunatic. Eventually his mind settled down a bit. He found a mountain cave and established himself there. He sat facing north and commenced contemplation on the essence of Self on the pretext of re-training his mind."

Beginning with the 8th verse of the 52nd Sarga, Sage Valmiki dealt with the issue of training the mind in 72 verses and closed the Sarga. Not satisfied with it, he extended the teaching on this topic to the entire 53rd Sarga of 82 verses. Both these chapters are a golden treasure for those who want to review again and again the essence of Knowledge of Self.

We shall, however, cover them here briefly - The first part of the 52nd Sarga was devoted to the development of detachment. Next was a discussion on the factors that help attainment of detachment. It was established here that contemplation on the essence of Truth was the best way for achieving detachment. This was followed up by a description of the method of inquiry into Self adopted by Uddālaka. Uddālaka's contemplation was based on the dictum, "I am unmodified." It was pointed out that 'impressions' could become blocks on the way to Self-realization. A detailed examination of 'impressions' was made and it was concluded that 'I-consciousness' was at the root of 'impressions'. Further analysis revealed that there was no scope for Self to possess either 'impressions' or 'I-consciousness'.

Both 'I-consciousness' and 'impressions' are attributes of the mind. The body provides the scaffolding to the mind. In a way body and mind are opposites. If the mind is hurt, it affects the body and *vice versa*. Thus one becomes the Affector and the other the Affected. They also identify with one another, i.e. mind in its working feels it is itself the body and the body feels it is itself the mind. Thus they have a relationship between the sustainer and the sustained. It is stated here that if a seeker delinks himself with any one of them (i.e. stops identifying himself with any one), he will automatically be free of attachment with the other. Uddalaka, after a prolonged and exhaustive inquiry, concluded as follows:

विगतमोहतया विमनस्तया गतविकल्पनचित्ततया स्फुटम् ।
उपरमाम्यहमात्मनि शीतले घनलवः शरदीव नभस्तले ।।

vigatamohatayā vimanastayā gatavikalpanacittatayā sphuṭam |
uparamāmyahamātmani śītale ghanalavaḥ śaradīva nabhastale ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 53, Sloka 82

"I am free of fantasy. I do not have a mind at all. That is, even if the mind is not totally dissolved, all modifications in it are gone. My self is now calm without perturbations. I do not fall under the category 'the seen'. Therefore, I am pure like a white cloud in the dark sky of Fall season."

23. The Yoga of Aum

Having decided thus, Uddālaka took up Yoga. Sage Valmiki devoted the 54th Sarga to a detailed description of the Yoga pursued by Uddālaka This write up is very dear to spiritual aspirants. Commentator, Shri Ananda Bhodendra Swami (ABS), also provided at this juncture a lucid account of the methods of reciting AUM. Given below is a short summary of both the original text and the commentary of Shri ABS:

Uddālaka adopted lotus posture. His eyes were half closed. He commenced recitation of AUM. He began on a high pitch. As a result, his mind was filled with the modification in the form of AUM. The consciousness confined within that modification gradually came close to the infinite Supreme Consciousness. With continued recitation of AUM without cessation, he could vividly understand the four quarters of AUM. AUM comprises four syllables – A, U, M and a half-syllable. With Sage Uddālaka concentrating on the first 'A' sound, the high-pitched recitation excited the air related to the fundamental life-force which began to emerge out of the body. (Excitement here means bringing about a type of movement). This process is called "Rechaka" or Exhalation. During Rechaka, the wind gets heated up because of some frictional forces. Sage Uddālaka's contemplation of Brahman heated it up further. With rising heat, flares developed during his contemplation and burnt his body completely.

Sage Vasishta commented here that the above result was due to the recitation of the first syllable A of AUM. He underlined that it was just the initial effect of reciting AUM and not a stage in the practice of Hatha Yoga (Steadfast Pranic Exercise).

यावदित्थमवस्थैषा प्रणवप्रथमक्रमे ।
बभूव न हठादेव हठयोगो हि दुःखदः ।।

yāvaditthamavasthaiṣā praṇavaprathamakrame |
babhūva na haṭhādeva haṭhayogo hi duḥkhadaḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 54, Sloka 9

"The state experienced by Sage Uddālaka was entirely an outcome of the initial stage of AUM recitation. The experience was gradual. It did not suddenly land on him. It was not due to Steadfast Pranic Exercises. The Path of Steadfast Pranic Exercises is painful!" emphasized Sage Vasishta. Commentator Shri ABS cautioned that this practice had to be observed with great care, as there was a chance that sudden exhalation of life-breath (air related to the fundamental life-force) could result in fainting or sometimes in death.

Sage Uddālaka then took up the second step of reciting 'U' in a medium pitch. The life-breath became steady like deep-sea waters. The state of life-breath staying steady for a long time is called "Kumbhaka" or "Retention." With Uddālaka continuing 'Retention', the white colored ashes of his burnt out body lying on the ground were blown up into the air by the winds of earlier Rechaka (exhalation), and looked like a white cloud of post-monsoon times. Sage Vasishta once again emphasized that the second step was also due to the recitation of 'U' and not owing to the practice of Steadfast Pranic Exercise.

With Sage Uddālaka embarking upon the third stage of reciting 'M' of AUM, the process of "Puraka" or "Inhalation" commenced. The life-breath was submerged in the beatitude of Self. Slowly the life-breath turned into rays of nectar. The nectar rays rained downwards. There was a little of his ash still lying on the ground. When the nectar rays fell on it, his body rose from it. But his body had four hands like Lord Vishnu and was, therefore, more suitable for completing the remaining part of Yoga.

Uddālaka once again assumed the lotus posture, controlled his senses, steadied his mind and made effort for Thoughtless form of Meditation (*nirvikalpa samādhi*). He augmented it with Breathing Exercises (*pranāyāma*). But his mind revolted again. Like a rogue ox tearing himself off the stake to which he was tethered and running away into cultivated fields, his mind ran away under the influence of the memories of past births. It used to ruminate on its past joys and comforts.

Still Uddālaka did not lose heart. He restarted an inquiry into Truth. He controlled his mind with discretion. He stayed focused on his aim. He took up "Raja Yoga" (The Royal Path) with half-closed eyes. As a part of Raja Yoga, he restrained both *pranā and apāna* (different states of life-force) wind. He withdrew his senses from objects (i.e. stopped cognition of objects). He was left with only the residual impressions in his mind. Contemplating intensely on the essence of Supreme Consciousness, the substratum for everything, he dissolved them in Brahman.

Uddālaka then changed his posture. He pressed hard on his anal region with one foot. He pulled the winds from the nine openings of the body (i.e. two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth and the two excretory organs) towards his heart and locked them there. He adopted vigorous Sense Withdrawal and practiced Concentration of Mind (*da Yoga*).

As a result his thoughts and counter thoughts vanished like small insects blown away by a forceful wind. His mind became serene.

But once again negative thoughts came to him. These were the types of thoughts that disturb continuous contemplation of Brahman. He resisted them too with determination.

All of a sudden, Uddālaka felt that he was staring at some darkness. He understood it to be the effect of *tamasic* quality in his heart space (*hridaya akāsa*). He deciphered that the resplendent sun of discretion was veiled by this *tamasic* quality. Immediately he meditated on *sātvic* quality. Consequently he witnessed the brilliant red light of a rising sun. After some time, it disappeared and his mind slipped into sleep.

The Commentator, Shri ABS, observed here that the visions and experiences of Uddālaka were nothing but an effect of his cogitations on the three *gunās* and hence whatever he experienced would come under the realm of illusory world.

Onset of Sleep is generally considered to be a symptom of failure in Yoga (spiritual path). Fortunately, Uddālaka could escape from sleep within a short time. Nevertheless, some other impressions of past births continued to engulf his mind. Under their influence, he began to contemplate on the origin of the universe. During such contemplation, he had visions of space (*akāsa*). He rejected those visions. But then his mind became blunt.

Uddālaka was in a state that was neither sleep nor wakefulness. Nor was it death. There were no thoughts in him. His mind was inert. Numbness of mind was a strange state indeed. It was also an impediment for spiritual progress. Uddālaka was able to come out of it after some time. Thus he went from visions of brightness to darkness to a state of numbness and then finally achieved "Thoughtless Meditation of Oneness (*nirvikalpa samādhi*)."

Uddālaka's mind, like a backflow, tended to go back to the illusory world and assumed the form of the world. Because his mind tasted the 'Bliss in Meditation', it sought to get back to meditation by force of habit. It reached the state of "Concentration under *triputi* conditions (*savikalpa samādhi* : a state of concentration in which the distinction between the knower, knowledge and known is not yet lost)." After spending a considerable amount of time in *savikalpa samādhi*, he achieved *nirvikalpa samādhi*. But then he slipped back to *savikalpa samādhi*. He pulled himself once again into *nirvikalpa samādhi*. He spent a very long time alternating between these two states or occasionally overtaken by the illusory world. A major portion of his time was spent in *savikalpa samādhi*. After the impressions of past lives slowly desiccated from his mind, he was able to attain *nirvikalpa samādhi* easily. Eventually his mind stabilized in *nirvikalpa samādhi*. He soon attained the state of "Common Beingness" (*satta sāmānya* : the 'existence' principle in everything in the world). It is equivalent to the state of "Consciousness as Mere Witness (*sakshi chaitanya*)". He remained like a statue.

It is the sixth step in Yoga. Normally any one who reaches this state never comes out of it unless some external agency lugs him out. For some reason, Uddālaka came out of it and opened his eyes. He found himself surrounded by celestial damsels! Every one of them was a beauty. Some of them were playing musical instruments and a few others were singing. Some others were dancing. Some were holding umbrellas. Yet others were bowing down at his feet. He saw an airplane too parked in the distance.

Uddālaka observed them all with total detachment. He could see them singing and dancing. He noticed that they were quite beautiful too. Beyond that there was no other arousal in his mind. He felt neither happy nor unhappy. Finding that the sage was watching them with open eyes but with no reaction, the Vidhyādhara (a type of Fairies) girls approached him. They praised him in flowing words and said finally:

"Sir ! We are the quintessence of heavenly enjoyment. We are here to take you to Heaven. Behold, there is a plane waiting for you. Come on over, Dear Sir, let's get going!"

Uddālaka just heard them. He merely smiled at their enticing and romantic maneuvers. He did not respond to their entreaties. They begged him repeatedly and implored him to go with them. He excused himself and went back into his meditation. The fairy girls continued singing and dancing around him for several days. But Uddālaka was deeply immersed in his meditation. The girls were tired. They returned to Heaven. Uddālaka remained in meditation for many more months.

24. The State of "Common Beingness"

Uddālaka used to come out of meditation once in a while – might be once in a month or a year or two or sometimes after a few days. As he persisted in this process, he attained the next step in Yoga.

चित्सामान्यचिराभ्यासात्सत्तासामान्यमेत्य सः ।
दृश्येऽस्मिंश्चित्ररविवन्नास्तमायान्न चोदयम् ।।

citsāmānyacirābhyāsātsattāsāmānyametya saḥ |
dṛśye'smiṃścitraravivannāstamāyānna codayam ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 545, Sloka 92

"He (Uddālaka) attained "Common Beingness" (*satta sāmānya*) state as he meditated for a long time contemplating that he himself was the Supreme Consciousness, the substratum for all. He glowed virtually like a sun that never sets. He was the same whether he was in meditation or out of it. This was the Seventh step in Yoga. Uddālaka was steady at that stage."

[Note: Attainment of "*satta sāmānya* state while in *Samadhi* is the Sixth step in Yoga. Attainment of *satta sāmānya* even when the seeker is out of *Samadhi* is the Seventh step in Yoga].

Rama interrupted Sage Vasishta's narration with the following question:

Rama: "My Teacher! You referred to the state of Uddālaka as '*satta sāmānya*'. What does that exactly mean?"

Vasishta: "Rama! There are four interpretations for this word.

> "1. Supreme Consciousness is reflected in every modification of the mind. Because of that, individuals are able to cognize what is seen. Suppose that all the seen objects are contradicted through a logical enquiry. (Contradiction here means that their existence is negated along with nescience that is the root cause for their very existence). What would happen to the Supreme Consciousness that is reflected in the mind of an individual who enquired thus? Mental modifications or objects being absent now, the reflected Consciousness merges with the original Supreme Consciousness. Original Consciousness is nothing but the original form of the individual. Therefore, the form of the consciousness of the individual in such a state as referred to above is called "Common Beingness" (*satta sāmānya*).
>
> "2. "Common Beingness" (*satta sāmānya*) is explained in another way also. Suppose that a mind discretely examines the Truth in every object in the world and rejects each one as not True. What would be left finally? Only the infinite Consciousness will remain. What would then happen to the mind that had been examining the Truth? It would have to have the form of Infinite Consciousness. There is no other way. That state is called "Common Beingness" (*satta sāmānya*).
>
> "3. There is a third explanation. We know that the root cause of the visible world are the five elements (*pancha bhūtas*). They appear as five elements to everybody in this world but their appearance is like seeing silver nuggets on the seashore. That is to say that they do not really appear in their true form. They are illusory visions, their true form being pearl oyster shells. Instead of that, if one is able to see the five elements for what they are (like seeing nacre and not silver nuggets), that state is described as *satta sāmānya*
>
> "4. Yet there is a fourth way of expressing this. All creatures in the world perceive objects. When a seeker pursuing Truth with determination contemplates on them, all objects appear as a form of Self. "Common Beingness" (*satta sāmānya*) is the state when all the things seen merge with the Self of the Seer and appear as a form of Supreme Self naturally and effortlessly.

"*satta sāmānya* state is obtained by a seeker in the fifth and sixth steps of yoga during meditation. This state is obtained at all times, whether one is in meditation or out of it for a seeker who is in the seventh step of Yoga. One need not have a doubt about the existence of such a state. Great Sages like Narada, Gods like Brahma, Vishnu, Eswara are in that state".

"Uddālaka obtained the state of *satta sāmānya*. He remained in that state until current suffrage (effects of past actions), *prārabdha*, for his body was exhausted.

"Now I shall narrate how Sage Uddālaka attained liberation leaving the body after current suffrage was exhausted.

"Sage Uddālaka stayed in the seventh step of Yoga for a long time. When the current suffrage (*prārabdha*) of the body was exhausted, the thought that "The body should finally emancipate (*kaivalya*)" occurred to him. Because his mind was quite familiar with the processes of yoga, an exercise suitable for renouncing the body commenced immediately.

'Uddālaka assumed the lotus pose. He closed his eyes. He constrained the anal opening and pulled the *apāna* wind upwards. He tightened the eight remaining openings of life-force (*prāna*). He converged the sensory actions and brought them near to the heart. He straightened the spine, neck and head into a vertical line and he started to visualize the sensory actions not as deeds but as a form of the infinite Brahman. He lifted his head up slightly, rolled his tongue backwards and took it up to uvula (*lambikā sthāna*). All the time he kept his mind focused on Ultra pure Consciousness.

"Uddālaka's mind, which had been so far slightly scared of the pain in the Lambikaa Yoga, was excited to experience the joy obtained through this yoga. Because his mind was already contemplating the Supreme Consciousness by that time, it attained the state of the Supreme Consciousness. Floating in that joy, he moved effortlessly into the state of "Common Beingness" (*satta sāmānya*).

"Rama! Please make a note here. There is a secret in the practice of this yoga. Even for an adept seeker, reining in the mind is a painful affair. Hence it keeps escaping from control on the most trivial of excuses. But if it obtains the joy of the end result of yoga, it will not return to its wayward ways. This is because the bliss of yoga is so many times greater than any other happiness. A mind which tasted that joy would be like an ant which tasted sweet. The ant resists even if pushed by a finger. This is called the Doctrine of Adherence (**गुडपिपीलिका न्याय** *guḍapipīlikā nyāya*) like the ant sticking to jaggery. A mind that reaches this state loses its individual identity completely. It attains initially the form of 'Common Consciousness (**चित् सामान्य** *cit sāmānya*)'. It will have only a shade of awareness of its own existence. If this state prevails robustly for sometime, that awareness too gets dissolved. This final state is **सत्ता सामान्य** *satta sāmānya*. This explains fully what is meant by my statement that Uddālaka reached "Common Beingness" (**सत्ता सामान्य** *satta sāmānya*) state from **चित् सामान्य** *cit sāmānya* state. I shall tell you now the changes that take place in the body concurrent with these developments.

"When Uddālaka's mind tasted the bliss of yoga, he had goose bumps and his hairs stood on end. As he moved from the **चित् सामान्य** *cit sāmānya* state to that of "Common Beingness" (**सत्ता सामान्य** *satta sāmānya*) state, his 'awareness' of joy too reduced and his body became normal. The residual nescience that is the root cause for experiencing **प्रारब्ध** *prārabdha* began to dissolve. The reason for the continued existence of his body was **प्रारब्ध** *prārabdha.*

The life-force (**प्राण** *prāṇa*) in him slowly calmed down like hot water losing temperature on its own. When the residual ignorance totally evaporated, the life-principle calmed down fully and was absorbed in eternal Bliss. His body stayed as it was. After about six months, the body dried up completely with no flesh and blood left. Only his skeleton remained. The body lying on the hill looked as if the God of the Mountain saved a stringed musical instrument.

"One day Goddess **पार्वति** *pārvati* along with her seven feminine forms – *sapta mātrikās* - came to the mountain range for a stroll. They saw the skeleton resembling a musical instrument. Mother **चामुण्डी** *cāmuṇḍī* was particularly happy to see the skeleton. She took it up and put it as a decoration on her crown.

Notice this, Rama! The appalling skeletal bones that were no more than mere scaffolding to the body prior to the attainment of Self-knowledge, could reach such an admirable status (fit to decorate the head of Goddess **चामुण्डी** *cāmuṇḍī*)! Who can say how magnificent the state of Supreme Self is!"

We come to the end of Uddālaka's story here. Uddalaka is the only person in the story except for a brief appearance of the fairy girls. Uddālaka's character was used to illustrate different stages and experiences that a seeker goes through as he reaches his final goal.

The first Canto, Adiparva, of the epic Mahabharata contains a reference to one Uddālaka. The story goes that a disciple buried himself at the command of his Guru in the soil beside a pond and came out of it after his Guru called him back. For this reason he was known as Uddālaka meaning one who appeared after ripping apart soil. One does not know if the two Uddālakas were one and the same person. However, the name sounds appropriate in the sense that Uddālaka of Vasishta's story ripped apart the soil of ignorance surrounding him on his way to obtaining Self-Knowledge. There are no other symbolic representations in this story. Therefore, further analysis on nomenclature may not serve any purpose.

25. Meditation-centered and Transaction-centered Knowledge

Rama too did not raise any question with respect to Uddālaka's story. He, however, sought clarification regarding one of Sage Vasishta's casual observations. So he asked him the following question:

Rama: "Sir, while describing the liberated state of Uddālaka, you remarked that you were also in the same state. I have doubts here. Suppose there are two Self-knowing persons. One is always in deep meditation. He wouldn't come out of it. But the other person, though knowledgeable of Self, does not take up deep meditation. He involves himself in worldly affairs. Who is better between the two?"

Sage Vasishta gave an elaborate reply to this apparently simple question. He devoted the entire 56th Sarga for his reply and extended a discussion on it into the 57th Sarga. Then he went on to narrate the story of Suraghu in the 58th Sarga. We shall have a brief look at his explanation.

The central theme of Vasishta's reply is contained in the following verse:

Vasishta:

व्यवहारी प्रबुद्धो यः प्रबुद्धो यो वने स्थितः ।
द्वावेतौ सुसमौ नूनमसंदेहं पदं गतौ ।।

vyavahārī prabuddho yaḥ prabuddho yo vane sthitaḥ |
dvāvetau susamau nūnamasaṃdehaṃ padaṃ gatau ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 56, Sloka 12

"When once knowledge of Self is obtained, the one who deals with worldly affairs and the one who is in deep meditation in a forest are both perfectly equal. Both have undoubtedly attained the Supreme."

To provide further proof, Sage Vasishta explained the meaning of deep meditation as follows:

चेतसो यदकर्तृत्वं तत्समाधानमुत्तमम् ।
तं विद्धि केवलीभावं सा शुभा निर्वृतिः परा ।।

cetaso yadakartṛtvaṃ tatsamādhānamuttamam |
taṃ viddhi kevalībhāvaṃ sā śubhā nirvṛtiḥ parā ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 56, Sloka 15

"It is Deep Meditation when the mind loses 'doership'. Not only that, it is the final Aloneness. That is the Supreme Blissful state."

Sage Vasishta provided additional proof as follows:

When does the mind get 'doership'? It gets 'doership' when impressions are still left within it. The mind does not have 'doership' any more when all the remnant impressions are totally decimated, even though the body may continue to exist and function.

An example for this is a person who auditions a story but with his attention somewhere else. Suppose a good story is being told. One of the listeners becomes inattentive. Though he sits right in front of the speaker, though the speaker has been shouting at the top of his voice, he (the listener) is not really listening. Hence he is not a listener.

Let us take another example. A person is in sound sleep. His body is not moving. He dreams that he fell down into a ditch and shouts for help. What could be the reason for this? Obviously some impressions are stored in his mind. Therefore, if there are impressions left in the mind, it gets 'doership' even if there is no apparent movement externally.

What is *samādhi* (deep meditation)? It is not sleeping. It is not deep sleep (*suśupti*). *Samādhi* stands for a steady, unwavering mind! It is ***not*** a mind which merely ***appears*** to be stable. It has to be truly balanced, composed, and steady. Such a steady state is unobtainable as long as impressions exist in mind. Hence *samādhi* is a state when impressions are annihilated. It is the same state as "Non-doership." Even if the body acts in this state, the mind does not get 'doership.' In other words, the mind in such a state does not have 'doership' whether the body is moving, or not moving, gets involved in worldly affairs or in deep meditation. A mind lacking 'doership' is the mind of a Self-realized person. Hence the mind of a Self-realized person is forever in the state of 'non-doership', in a state of perpetual *samādhi*. It can be easily concluded from this that it makes no difference at all whether a Self-realized person is in deep meditation or immersed in worldly affairs. A question on the relative greatness of such persons is irrelevant.

After completing his line of argument as above, Sage Vasishta provided another definition for *samādhi* .

प्रशान्तजगदास्थोऽन्तर्वीतशोकभयैषणः ।
स्वस्थो भवति येनात्मा स समाधिरिति स्मृतः ।।

cetaso yadakartṛtvaṃ tatsamādhānamuttamam |
taṃ viddhi kevalībhāvaṃ sā śubhā nirvṛtiḥ parā ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 56, Sloka 20

"*Samādhi* is that state when one does not consider the world as real and therefore loses desires, has no fears and sorrows and has the mind in its own place (*swastha*)."

Sage Vasishta offers a couple of examples for clarity.

Suppose a person is seated alone on a high mountain in a thick forest. His mind is fully occupied with the phenomenal world. Can anyone say that he is in meditation? Another person, though staying in his house, does not concern himself with any of what is going on in the house. Can we call him a householder ?

Here is yet one more example. A person was told that a snake entered his room in which the iron safe was kept. He ran away leaving all his money, valuables, jewelry and gold. Can we describe his act as detachment for wealth? It does not amount to renouncement at all if a person leaves the worldly things out of fear, anger or excessive attachment for something else. True sacrifice is rejecting the worldly things without fear, anger or attachment to something else. Is that possible in the world ? Does such a sacrifice exist ?

A person saw a few silver nodules lying at a distance on the seashore. He ran towards them. As he approached them, he found them to be no more than pearl oyster shells. He laughed at himself when he understood that he was fooled because of his mistaken impression. Now shall we say that the person left the silver nodules because of fear or because of hatred towards them or with a hope of getting still bigger nuggets of silver ? Definitely not. Then why did he leave them? He left them because of his certitude that silver did not exist. If silver did not exist, where is the question of leaving it? So neither holding on to silver nor leaving it does arise. When once he understood that the silver nuggets did not exist, he transcended both actions of holding on to and rejecting them. He is not aroused. He is quietened. He calmed down

Similarly there is no scope for sorrow, fear or other desires to cling to a mind that understands that the world does not really exist. It is calmed down going beyond such deeds like hoarding or giving up. Where does such a mind go ? It cannot go anywhere. It stays within itself. Sage Vasishta described this state as "**स्वात्थो भवेत् येनात्मा**" "*svāttho bhavet yenātmā*". Such a mind cannot be described to be immersed in worldly affairs. Physical transfers involving give and take exist in worldly affairs. We cannot just say that a mind is involved in worldly affairs. We cannot also describe that person to be in meditation, because meditative state involves withdrawal of senses from external objects and continued experience of a distinction between the meditator and the thing meditated upon.

We cannot describe the state of such a mind by any name other than *samādhi*. Only in a state of *samādhi* does the mind lose its movement; will be free of acceptance or rejection; and has no sense of differentiation. Therefore, we have to call the state of mind obtained after realizing the falsity of the world as *samādhi* only. There is no other way of describing it.

Let us say that the body of a person whose mind understands Truth is involved in worldly affairs because of some residual current suffrage (*prārabdha*). Does his mind act thinking that the affairs it is involved in are Real? The answer is no. The wisdom of the mind stays 'steadfast' even while conducting the affairs of the world. So it continues to be in the state of *samādhi*. It attained the state of being within itself. The question whether his body is acting or not becomes invalid. So any talk on the relative superiority of a Self realized person involved in worldly affairs or a Self-realized person in deep meditation is meaningless. Whatever he may do, a Self-realized person is a Self realized person.

26. Black Pepper Seed

After thus offering definitions and detailed explanations for *samādhi*, Sage Vasishta made very profound remarks advising Rama as follows:

Vasishta: "If the mind is filled with impressions, it becomes vulnerable to likes and dislikes and hence will be unstable. Sometimes it may fall into deep sleep (*suśupti*) for a little while in-between its oscillations. It will not have movement or desire during *suśupti*. But then we cannot call it as *samādhi* because literally thousands of triggers for throwing you back into a wakeful state are hidden in seed form in *suśupti*. The practices aimed at liberation of many of the ordinary people are like *suśupti*.

"Instead of that, if the impressions in the mind are totally destroyed, if likes and dislikes are completely eliminated, you will obtain a blissful state. And that state is liberation. So please choose a path as per your preference."

Sage Vasishta expanded the above advice to over 50 verses. He talked briefly about the practices one needs to adopt in order to get rid of impressions. He also indicated how a person free of impressions would be. The 49th verse in the 56th Sarga is truly a gem:

आत्मवत्सर्वभूतानि परद्रव्याणि लोष्टवत् ।
स्वभावादेव न भयाद्यः पश्यति स पश्यति ।।

ātmavatsarvabhūtāni paradravyāṇi loṣṭavat |
svabhāvādeva na bhayādyaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 56, Sloka 49

"Only he, who naturally and not for fame or out of fear or with a hope of getting a better status, sees all creatures as equal to himself and considers others possessions as no more than mere lumps of earth is a true Seer."

Sage Vasishta persuaded Rama to strive for such a state. He remarked that a person of that state would be free of the effects of actions like sin and merit. Pairs of opposites such as likes-dislikes etc. would not touch him.

So far Sage Vasishta had stressed on the falsity of the visible world. However, he changed the tactic in the 57th Sarga while discussing the methods of contemplation to be observed in achieving *samādhi*. He proffered help to the seeker in perceiving the world, which, though visible, does not really exist.

Vasishta: "Rama! Suppose there is a seed of black pepper. You chew it. Your tongue will be on fire (feels hot). Now tell me what is black pepper? Is it the black seed that you saw or is it the hotness on your tongue? Let's say that there is a lump of salt. You taste it. Your tongue feels salty. Now what is salt ? Is it the white lump or the salty taste?

"Whatever one may argue, it is the saltiness that has the lumpy form. It is the hotness that is in the form of black pepper. It cannot be any other way. An intelligent chef looks at black pepper or a lump of salt, recognizes the hotness or saltiness and uses just the right amounts of pepper or salt in cooking. In a similar way, an aspirant should learn to notice the intrinsic, unlimited quality of Consciousness present in all worldly objects.

"Because everything in the visible world is an illusory appearance of the Supreme Self, every substance in the world has got to have the Supreme Self as its substratum and support. Therefore, the seeker has to learn to identify the Self which forms the substratum for everything in the way the chef recognized the taste by merely looking at the seeds of pepper or lump of salt. Believe that Brahman permeates everything. The phrase that Brahman permeates everything appears to imply that there is a distinct substance 'Brahman' permeating another substance 'everything.' This is due to the deficiency in the usage of words or expressions in a language. In fact there are no two things. What is, is One only. One must be able to understand this. Reciting AUM helps in the attainment of such an understanding.

"I shall describe to you the path adopted by Suraghu, a hunter King, so that you may fully appreciate the significance."

Prior to narrating the story of Gadhi, Sage Vasishta talked about different paths as well as processes that would lead to Self-realization. He cited the stories of King Janaka, Emperor Bali and Devotee Prahlada to illustrate his point.

He portrayed in detail, through Gadhi's story, how the illusory phenomenon (*māya*) works as an overwhelming impediment in obtaining Self Knowledge. He later described a series of techniques of Yoga for achieving the knowledge of Self. The story of Uddalaka formed a part of this narration. It was a story just for name's sake. It was more of an exhaustive account of the processes involved in liberation. The hero of the story was fortunate to attain a state of detachment even before he reached adolescence.

Sage Vasishta proposes here to introduce us to the travails and tribulations in the pursuit of liberation faced by middle-aged persons having family life and social responsibilities and having gone through various conflicts in life. The case study taken for this purpose is the story of Suraghu. The story contains a few additional tips appropriate to middle aged persons on achieving Self-realization.

27. Story of Suraghu

"Once upon a time there lived a hunter tribe known as Hemajatas near the Kailash Mountain Range in the Himalayas. Suraghu was their king. He was an intelligent person and gained expertise in many fields. He had good control over his people. He was a capable administrator. He was a poet, a lover of art and also a brave warrior. In addition, he was a devotional type of person. Because of his multifarious talents, his kingdom expanded. In course of time, his hair grayed and he felt he was on the descending limb of his life. He mused within himself on these lines:

"I have been ruling over the kingdom for quite some time. I had to treat some people harshly during my governance. I had to punish a few, order around others and protect the people in general. These things are inevitable in public administration. People will not stay within their limits without such measures. I had the role of a ruler in this drama of life. Does any sin accrue to me in my actions of governing people? How can I be sure that the punishments imposed by me were justified? It is said that one will certainly go to hell at the end of a reign (**राज्यन्ते नरकं ध्रुवं** *rājyante narakaṃ dhruvaṃ*). However great a king may be, the maxim operates inexorably. What would be my fate?"

"Suraghu continuously churned the problem in his mind. He could not arrive at a conclusive answer.

"One day Sage Mandavya happened to visit Suraghu. The King felicitated and paid his respects to him and posed to Mandavya the question that was bugging him. He begged him, "Sir! Is there no way at all to escape from this cycle of sin and merit?"

"Sage Manadavya replied to him with a smile, "My dear King! If an effort is made, there is no problem that does not have a solution. Accrual of sin and merit are inescapable for any person involved in worldly affairs. There is only one way out of it. Begin a new way of thinking,

कोऽहं कथमिदं किंवा कथं मरणजन्मनी ।
विचारयान्तरेवं त्वं महत्तामलमेष्यसि ।।

ko'haṃ kathamidaṃ kiṃvā kathaṃ maraṇajanmanī |
vicārayāntarevaṃ tvaṃ mahattāmalameṣyasi ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 58, Sloka 32

"Who am I? How did the world come about? What is the meaning of this world? How do I die? How was I born?" Think over these questions. Churn them over in your mind. You feel inadequate, inferior because you lack contemplation on these questions. You felt that you were merely the six-foot body. You felt limited to the extent of your kingdom. Deep thinking will lead you to transcend those limitations. You will be a great man. You will become a noble man. You will be permeating everywhere. Neither sin nor merit will stick to you once you reach that state.

"Until you reach that state, you will have to develop detachment with the world. You should study spiritual texts. You should renounce everything that you find to be untrue. As you go on rejecting everything, you will be finally left with something that you cannot get rid off. And that is the Supreme state. You do not have to be concerned at all about sin or merit in the Supreme state. So make an effort to obtain that state,"

So saying, Sage Mandavya took leave of King Suraghu. Accordingly, King Suraghu embarked on a course of inquiry. "Who am I? Am I the visible world? Am I the kingdom? Am I this hill? Am I the earth? Am I the city?" He negated all these. "Am I this body?" he paused here. He felt he could be the body. His search continued. "Am I the body? I am not the skin. I am not the flesh in the body. I am not blood. I am not the bones. If none of these is I, how could I be the body?

"Is it that I am in the body? In such a case, am I the senses? Am I the mind? Both of them are inert. How could I be inert? Am I conscious ? Though I am none of these, I get the sensation that I exist. Therefore, there has to be a witness inside. I cannot presume that that witness is distinct from me. Is the witness an associate of mine ? If there is an entity other than myself inside me, how could it be that I am unaware? Hence, I have myself to be that witness. Yes! I am that Pure Witness! If that is so, how did the world originate? How did the pairs of opposites like sorrow and happiness come about? They are nothing but a phantasm, my fantasy. They appear 'to be'; but do not truly exist. Every incident that takes place in this illusory world is likewise non-existing. There are neither kingdoms nor kings.

"The effects of action (sins and merits) that arise because of the non-existing senses and mind are also untrue. They can only affect senses and mind, which are equally untrue. They cannot harm me who is Supreme True Consciousness. I am the Supreme Truth. Infinite bliss is my nature.

नमो मह्यमनन्ताय सम्यग्ज्ञानोदयाय च ।।

namo mahyamanantāya samyagjñānodayāya ca ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 59, Sloka 37

"I salute the Knowledge that dawned on me. I bow down to myself, the Supreme Infinite Form."

"Suraghu was a transformed personality after these thoughts. He was like Sage Viswamitra who realized Brahman. He never fell out of the enlightened feeling. He ruled the kingdom in a Self-realized state for several hundred years."

Sage Vasishta concluded the story of Suraghu with an advice to Rama. He said, "Rama! You asked me about the difference between a liberated person active in the worldly affairs and another staying in *Samadhi*. Now you tell me if there is a difference between Sage Uddalaka and Royal sage Suraghu. Imbibe this and explore your own True nature."

28. Could Knowledge be Permanent ?

Rama listened carefully to everything that was said. He finally asked Sage Vasishta a question.

Rama: "Revered Teacher! The mind has a quality of never being steady. Is it possible that the mind will stay firm with the deduction arrived at after a one-time analysis?"

Vasishta: "I shall tell you of an incident that took place in the life of Suraghu after he attained the state of stable mind. This should relieve you of your doubt.

"Parigha was the King of Persia and a contemporary of Suraghu. Parigha and Suraghu were good friends. Parigha was also a great person as can be understood from the following story.

"Once there was a great famine in Persia due to drought. Parigha adopted many famine-relief measures. But they proved inadequate. A number of people died because of scarcity. Parigha was desperate and hated himself for his inability to control the situation. He deserted the kingdom. He set off to forests for meditation. He stopped eating food because his people were starving. He survived on dry leaves. He observed austerities and meditated. His sons took care of the kingdom during his absence. Slowly things got settled in his kingdom. However, Parigha continued his meditation for a thousand years.

"Lord Shiva appeared before him after a thousand years. As the kingdom was free of problems by then Parigha wondered what he should request Shiva as a boon. Being a wise man, he requested Shiva for purity of mind. Shiva blessed him accordingly. When once his consciousness was purified, he obtained Self-knowledge automatically. Thus he was liberated right in his life-time (*jīvanmukta*). He spent the rest of his life wandering freely along with other saints and sages.

"At about the same time, Suraghu attained Self realization through the grace of Sage Mandavya. He was also liberated right in his life, but continued to rule the kingdom. Parigha happened to visit Hemajata's kingdom during his wanderings. He called on Suraghu. Thus the two old friends met without a preplan. One was a King and the other was a Royal sage who renounced his kingdom. These differences, however, did not reflect on their old friendship. They hugged each other, talked to each other with mutual affection and shared their experiences.

"When Suraghu said that he obtained Knowledge of the Supreme through the grace of Sage Mandavya, Parigha remarked that he got liberated directly through the appearance of Shiva. Though Parigha had been conversing in a friendly way, he had a doubt in his heart of hearts about the state of liberation of Suraghu because of the fact that Suraghu was still ruling the kingdom involving himself in worldly affairs in spite of claiming Self-realization. So he wanted to ask Suraghu a question in a way of confirmation. He addressed Suraghu as follows: "Dear Friend! King Suraghu! You have realized the essence of the Supreme Truth. On one hand you are in a constant state of *samādhi*. On the other hand you are taking care of the governance of your kingdom. When you are in *samādhi*, are you able to be in a thoughtless state or do you face any problems?"

"Suraghu responded with a question, "What is the state of thoughtless *samādhi* ?"

As Sage Parigha did not reply, Suraghu continued.

Suraghu:

तत्त्वावबोधो भगवन्सर्वाशातृणपावकः ।
प्रोक्तः समाधिशब्देन नतु तूष्णीमवस्थितिः ।।

tattvāvabodho bhagavansarvāśātṛṇapāvakaḥ |
proktaḥ samādhiśabdena natu tūṣṇīmavasthitiḥ |

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 62, Sloka 8

"*samādhi* is not sitting in one position with eyes closed and without budging. It is also not that the senses stay fixed. *samādhi* is a state when the stored impressions in the mind are totally annihilated. Knowledge of Truth is essential for this to happen. Only then does the mind stay established in the Supreme. That is one-pointed attention. That is true *samādhi* ."

"It is not possible that such an individual could be in any other state than that of *samādhi* . Is there any need to make an effort to be in that state? It is all the same whether he continues in worldly affairs because of his previous habit or in yogic meditation of *samādhi* . It cannot be *samādhi* if an individual forcefully controls his senses and sits frozen without realization of the Supreme Truth.

"My Friend! You have been enquiring whether I could obtain a thoughtless state in *samādhi* . When do I have any thoughts? One goes into a thoughtless state intermittently only in case thoughts continue to be present. If a thoughtless state defines *samādhi* , I am always in *samādhi* .

"What I said thus far sounds as if there is a distinct mind of mine which goes to merge with the Supreme Self and that state is *samādhi* . Let me hasten to add this. That is not the correct representation. The mind does not exist at all. From this angle, there is no *samādhi* for me. 'What is' is only the non-dual Oneness! The whole visible world is Me ! When that is the Truth, where is the question of *samādhi* or non-*samādhi* state?"

"Listening to this astute exposition, Royal Sage Parigha was immensely pleased. He understood the high level of Suraghu's wisdom. He extolled him cheerfully with these words, "You are truly a Self-knowing person! You reached the Supreme state that has to be attained." Later they spent considerable time together discussing the essence of Truth, and happily went away on their respective errands.

"Therefore, Rama, inquire into Self like them. If you get rid of the mind once through an inquiry into Self, it will not originate again. If you want to know what a "cow" is, the best way for you is to go and see it. Similarly, if you want to know about Self, you have to experience it. There is no short cut."

Preaching thus, Sage Vasishta devoted the whole of Sargas 63 and 64 to lead Rama on a course of Self-inquiry. He portrayed the essence of Self from many angles. He elaborated on the Seven Steps of Attaining Self Knowledge. Finally, he addressed Rama in these words:

Vasishta: "The mind has to be cut by the mind itself. Then only you will be free of the illusory world and witness the Supreme Self. Be warned, it is not an easy path. You will have to face many hurdles. But you should not give up. Let me give you a good example in order to make things more clear."

Thus Sage Vasishta introduced the Story of Bhāsa and Vilāsa. This also is a story just in name.

29. Story of Bhāsa and Vilāsa

Vasishta: "A long time ago, two great sages lived on the northern slopes of Sahya Mountains. They were good friends. Both of them had a son each. The name of one boy was Bhāsa and the other Vilaasa. Bhāsa and Vilāsa grew up as friends in that forest where there were no other people. By the time the boys reached adolescence, their parents passed away almost at about the same time. The sons carried out the prescribed funeral rites. They were unable to continue living at the same place, as they were mentally very upset. So they left the forest and went away in different directions. However, they could not get peace of mind anywhere. They moved around for a number of days. They fortuitously met at a place during their wandering. They were surprised to see each other. They felt very happy to meet again. They enquired about each other's welfare, state of their meditation and Self realization.

"The casual conversation of Bhāsa and Vilāsa actually turned out to be a discussion on Self inquiry. Finding out about the welfare of each other itself became an exercise in understanding Truth. They educated one another on the essence of Truth during their discussions. They both attained Self-realization. They were liberated.

"Rama! What do you think made them wander around like mad caps without understanding Truth ? It was nothing but the feeling of attachment inside their 'self(s)'. Enlightening each other through their discussions, they could get rid of attachment and were liberated. Therefore, any person desirous of liberation should free himself from attachment within."

Sage Vasishta covered the story of Bhāsa and Vilāsa in three Sargas from 65 to 67.

30. Attachment Within

The 68th Sarga starts off with a question by Rama.

Rama: "Revered Teacher! You say that attachment within should be wiped out. What is 'Attachment within (*antassanga*)'? How does it bind individuals? How to get rid of it ?"

Sage Vasishta's reply to the questions was very elaborate and was extended to the end of the 81st Sarga. Finally he said at the beginning of the 82nd Sarga, "What I talked to you so far was the method adopted by Samvarta, brother of Brihaspati, in his Self-inquiry. Samvarta himself once narrated it to me. So I taught you his modus operandi."

Sage Vasishta planned to blend this discussion with a discussion on the method adopted by Sage Veetahavya. We shall bear this in mind and look into the import of the 14 Sargas from 68 to 81 (inclusive of both).

Sage Vasishta's response to Rama's question on Attachment was on the following lines:

Vasishta:

अनन्तस्यात्मतत्त्वस्य सपर्यन्तत्वनिश्चये ।
यत्सुखार्थित्वमन्तः स सङ्गो बन्धार्ह उच्यते ।।

anantasyātmatattvasya saparyantatvaniścaye |
yatsukhārthitvamantaḥ sa saṅgo bandhārha ucyate ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 68, Sloka 3

"It is attachment when you decide that Self is divisible into space, time and substance forgetting that it is an indivisible infinite whole. It is attachment when you long for happiness enjoying worldly objects forgetting that you yourself represent the infinite bliss. It is attachment that shackles us.

"It is also an attachment to think that the body is self (jiva) and self is body forgetting that self is sentient and the body is insentient and the two are totally distinct.

"Rama! You can understand the meaning of self from the above definitions. To know that the body etc. is not you is non-attachment. To recognize that there is no fragmentation is non-attachment. To know that your true nature is infinite bliss is non-attachment.

"Not only human beings but also birds and animals have attachment. When cattle are pulled by the ring attached to their nose, sometimes they get scared and resist the pull though it may rip their nose. Why do you think they do that? It is because of the 'Attachment within.' Trees, though dehydrated in summer and drenched in rain, still struggle to survive. This is also because of 'attachment within.'

"Attachment engenders bondage.

संसक्तिर्द्विविधा प्रोक्ता वन्द्या वन्ध्या च राघव ।
वन्ध्या सर्वत्र मूढानां वन्द्या तत्त्वविदां निजा ।।

saṃsaktirdvividhā proktā vandyā vandhyā ca rāghava |
vandhyā sarvatra mūḍhānāṃ vandyā tattvavidāṃ nijā ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 68, Sloka 21

"Attachment within is of two types. One is to be adored (vandya samsakti). This is present in persons knowledgeable of Self. The other is to be avoided (*vandhya samsakti*). This is present in ignoramus.

"The 'adorable attachment' is the reason for actions like Trinity performing their function of creation, sustenance and dissolution and rulers and great sages offering their guidance and preaching to the public. One hardly needs to look for examples for the actions of the avoidable attachment. Indra and hosts of gods are also subjected to it. Strictly speaking, the image of this world had formed in consciousness-space because of avoidable attachment. Enjoyments and manifestations are expanding by leaps and bounds under its influence.

"You were curious to know what has to be done to wipe it out. A man with discretion should never let his mind stick to any thing, whatever may be his actions. You have to take care to see that the mind does not cling to any object, any event, any region, any relation, any sense organ, any quality, any theory, any enjoyment, any spiritual attainment (occult power or siddhi) and so on. One should learn to perform action without a desire for the result so that the mind does not get attached. This is called 'Practicing Non-attachment'.

"A person 'Practicing Non-attachment' does participate in all worldly affairs. Yet he will be free of sorrow and fear. There will be a special glow in the person who fully adopts this practice. When actions take place in this fashion, it may be described as a state of deep sleep in wakefulness. His body functions just like a machine in such a state. When this condition matures and ripens, elders call the state 'Turiya'. One who has reached this state is described as liberated right in this birth (*jīvanmukta*). When he crosses this state and the body falls down, he is described as '*turiyatīta*' (Beyond the Fourth state or Self) or '*videhamukta*' (Liberated without the body).

"We need not discuss now the state beyond the fourth state (*turiyatīta*). It cannot be explained even using Vedic statements. Make a determined effort to attain the Fourth state using the technique of Non-attachment. The biggest block for such an effort is none other than your mind. As a matter of fact, it is ignorance (nescience) of the individual in the guise of his mind, memory, consciousness, ego or I-consciousness that creates the sprawling phantasmagoria (*samsāra*).

31. Various Names of Mind

Rama: "Sir! How come my mind has got so many names? Kindly enlighten me."

Vasishta: "Rama! All substances are forms of the essence of Self. Everything is born out of the Cosmic mind. A part of ocean water is in the form of waves. Waves keep moving. Water stays steady and unmoving in another part of the ocean. In the same way the essence of Self too vibrates in some places and stays steady at others.

"Living beings are the vibrating form of Self. Inert substances are the non-vibrating form. The essence of Self residing in the forms of living beings appears to be separate with distinct bodies because of the nescience it has created within itself. Because nescience is the cause for bringing about the differentiation as individuals, we may say that nescience itself is the "individual" (*jīva*). It is like saying mud is the pot (an earthen pot).

"The essence of Self gets the characteristic of segregation because of acquiring life-principle (*prāna dhāraṇa*). Looked at from this angle, one can say that an individual is the same as the essence of Self which had acquired life-principle because of nescience. (There is a derivation that says, '**जीव प्राणधारणे**' "*jīva prāṇadhāraṇe*" , meaning : the part of the essence of Self that forms the substratum for life-principle, is named as jiva.) The same nescience grows and creates a feeling of 'I', 'I'. The part of the essence of Self is then referred to as "I-consciousness" (*ahmakāra*).

"The same nescience generates decision making capabilities. Then that part of the essence of Self is termed "intellect" (buddhi). The same nescience gives the feeling that the five elements have accumulated like a dump at one place. From this the very same essence of Self gets the name of "body" (*deha*). There is a derivation as, '**दिह उपचये**' '*diha upachaye*' It means accumulation, solidification and condensation.

"Thus the one essence of Self gets several names depending on the quality It acquires and the derivatives available in the language. Nobody can invoke all qualities at one time. Each time a name is given depending on the predominant quality. If we consider the quality of consciousness as primary in the essence of Self, it becomes sentient. If nescience is primarily considered, it is insentient. The pure essence of Self is not tied up by the phenomenal world. Nor do the inert get tied down by the world. Only the consciousness of living beings lying in-between is vulnerable to being tied down to the world.

"Rama! The crux of the whole thing is that the mind engenders the phantasmagoria. What can destroy it is Knowledge of Self.

"You were not born when the body was born. You will not die with the body. What sort of relationship do you entertain with the body? When there is no relationship to the body, where is the question of sexual attraction? What is the difference between the male and female bodies ? The ignorant ones speak of the delicateness of the female body and the strength of male body. Knowledgeable ones see both as lumps of five elements. Not merely the dissimilarity between man and woman, every division that is a cause for your happiness or misery is also like that. We discussed this issue in depth in the past. Can you truly attribute your happiness or misery to any Real substance? Is it due to some unreal thing? Or is it because of some real-unreal thing? Remember, we classified the causes into three categories as above and debated in great detail. You may recollect that we finally concluded that there was really nothing that served as a base for happiness or misery.

"Therefore, Rama, be sure of one thing. The entire world is Self. It is a mere illusion to see any other thing! Sharpen your capacity of inquiry into Truth to achieve this viewpoint.

अहं खमहमादित्यो दिशोऽहमहमप्यधः ।
अहं दैत्या अहं देवा लोकाश्चाहमहं महः ।।

ahaṃ khamahamādityo diśo'hamahamapyadhaḥ |
ahaṃ daityā ahaṃ devā lokāścāhamahaṃ mahaḥ ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 73, Slokla 3

"I am space. I am the sun. I am four quarters. It is me up above and down below. I am the gods. I am the demon. I am the world. I am light as well as darkness.

"Practice contemplation on a non-dual Oneness of Self in the above manner. There are three ways of doing it.

1. Self transcends the world:

Viewed from this angle, Self contradicts the isness (beingness/existence) of the world. Contradiction here means establishing the non-existence of effect along with its cause.

2. Self is merely the substratum:

After contradicting the existence of the world as per (1) above, i.e. after establishing that the world does not exist, whatever remains as second to none is the substratum.

3. Self is omnipresent, assumes all forms and illuminates everything:

All the terms mean the same thing. The substratum for every thing in the world, which, though non-existing, appears as existing, is the Supreme Self. Hence, Self manifests in the form of everything. In fact, it is Self that is in all those forms.

"You can practice union with Self following any one of the above given viewpoints. Or you can use them sequentially one after another.

"Practicing thus, you have to get the experiential understanding of the Self by yourself. You should not wait or depend on Vedic aphorisms, scriptural statements or sermons.

"Rama! Liberation and bondage are just a fiction. There is no meat in those words. You are liberated. Experience it!"

The 73rd Sarga was closed with those profound words. He recapitulated the reasons for the origination of the illusory world in the 74th Sarga. He established once more that an inappropriate inquiry into Self was the main reason for illusion and an opposite inquiry would lead to necessary wisdom resulting in perfect knowledge. The qualities of a person Liberated right in this birth (Jivanmukta) were spelt out all over again.

Sage Vasishta listed the names of a number of Jivanmuktas in the 75th Sarga. The list covers a wide variety of persons coming from different backgrounds. Examples are:

Royalty	Emperor Janaka (Rama s' Father- in-law)
	Emperor Dilip (Rama's grand father)
	Emperor Mandhata (Of Rama's lineage)
	Emperor Bali (Belongs to Netherworld)
	Emperor Nahusha (Belongs to Bhuloka)

Demons	Vritrasura
	Prahlada
	Sambarasura
	Kusala
Gods	God of Fire, Agni
	Brihaspati
	Sukra
	Brahma
	Vishnu
	Shiva
	Parvati
	Adisesha
	Yama
Sivaganas	Bringhi
	Kumaraswami
Sages	Narada
	Viswamitra

Sage Vasishta described how they functioned and conducted themselves without attachment to worldly affairs. At the end, he repeated his advice to Rama that he should also have discretion and detachment and perform his actions without attachment as a *jīvanmukta.*

Sage Vasishta then explained the two terms 'liberation with body right in this life' and 'liberation without the body'. He referred to the concepts of Buddhism and Samkhya in the last Sloka of this Sarga and remarked that the followers of those schools of thought were totally mistaken in spite of their in-depth studies. According to him, the noble followers of Vedic path could achieve a clear understanding of Truth.

In the 76th Sarga, Sage Vasishta became poetic and compared the phenomenal world to an ocean. He discussed the methods of safely crossing it. He commended Rama for his commitment towards inquiring into Truth at a tender age.

Besought by Rama, he was immensely pleased to portray once again the characteristics of a *jīvanmukta* in lilting melody in the 77th Sarga. These 44 verses are good for daily recitation by seekers.

Finally, he said,

Vasishta: "Because of a vibration in the mind, there appears to be a movement called world."

The above statement provoked Rama to pose a question immediately.

Rama: "Sir! How does the mind generate a vibration? How does the vibration get attenuated?"

Vasishta: "We talk of 'vibration in mind' as if a separate entity as mind exists and an external vibration impinges on it. But there are no two entities. There is one only. The mind itself is vibration and vibration is mind! We say that there is heat in a fire. Does it mean that heat is distinct from fire? No. In the same way, mind and vibration are not separate. As long as the mind exists, vibration will not end. Elders speak of two ways to annihilate the mind.

द्वौ क्रमो चित्तनाशस्य योगो ज्ञानं च राघव ।
योगस्तद्वृत्तिरोधो हि ज्ञानं सम्यगवेक्षणम् ।।

dvau kramo cittanāśasya yogo jñānaṃ ca rāghava |
yogastadvṛttirodho hi jñānaṃ samyagavekṣaṇam ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 78, Sloka 8

"There are two ways to destroy the mind. One is by Yoga; and another is through Knowledge. *Yoga* refers to control of modifications in the mind. Knowledge is the ability to see Truth as is!"

32. Ending Mind through Yoga

Rama: "Revered Teacher! Let us consider the first path of Yoga to start with. Breathing exercises etc. are called *Yoga*. Are you referring to the same? Will the movements in the mind stop permanently with *Yoga* ? Does one get infinite bliss?"

Sage Vasishta wanted to give a clear answer to this question. He desired to convey that movement in the mind was dependent on the movement of life-principle (*prāna*). So to begin with, he talked about what was life-principle. He said that it was the essence of all bodily organs and it was identified by different names as prana, apana etc. as it flowed through different celestial nerves in the body. He added,

अन्तःप्राणपरिस्पन्दात्संकल्पकलनोन्मुखी ।
संवित्संजायते यैषा तच्चित्तं विद्धि राघव ।।

antaḥprāṇaparispandātsaṃkalpakalanonmukhī |
saṃvitsaṃjāyate yaiṣā taccittaṃ viddhi rāghava ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 78, Sloka 13

"Please know this, Rama ! Life-principle moves inside the body. With that movement, a surge takes place in the consciousness that is within the body. That change is called 'thought'. Mind is the name of the consciousness which is in the process of changing into 'thought'."

Therefore, if the life-principle is controlled, the mind also gets controlled. With the vibration in the mind ceasing, bondage with the world ends. Explaining the methods of controlling life-principle, Sage Vasishta taught some of the techniques of Royal Path.

He wanted to talk on *sālamba yoga* (methods using seed letters and deities), *nirālamba yoga* (methods of concentration directly on Self) and *rāja yoga* (methods of Ashtanga Yoga) though he used a different terminology.

The techniques recommended by him were as follows:

1. Study of Scriptures, Association with Noble Persons and Cultivation of Detachment will help in losing interest in worldly affairs. With increasing disinterest, the movement of life-principle reduces by itself.

2. Adopt any entity – anything that you prefer to. It could be a mountain peak; it could be the disc of the moon; it could be some form of a god or any of your favorite things. Learn to focus your mind on it. This is called "*ekatatva ghana dhyāna*", Meditation by focusing on a Single Entity. Movement of Life-principle stops once it gets stabilized.

3. Both the above techniques require a strong determination. In case it is not possible, follow breathing exercises of Inhalation, Retention and Exhalation along with Meditation in solitude. With this also the movement of life-principle gets arrested.

4. Learn the method of reciting AUM. Practice it regularly and proceed from A to M and learn to focus the mind on the fourth part of AUM viz. the half-syllable. Then also the movement of life-principle reduces. (Half-syllable refers to a state when only a drone, a nominal sound, is audible, after a reduction in the clear utterance of the syllables A, U and M).

5. Exhale the breath completely. Do not inhale immediately. Stop the movement of air in the body organs. If this is practiced for a long time, the movement of life-principle stops.

6. The other method is to inhale a large amount of air and fill the body with it. When no more air can be taken in, retain the air inside for a long time. Then the movement of life-principle will be reduced.

7. Alternately, after inhalation, at the stage of Retention, if the life-principle is also held for a long time along with the breath inside, the movement of life-principle reduces.

[Note: This indicates to us that breath is different from life-principle. Life-principle is inside the body and is the essence of the strength of the body organs, whereas breath is its external manifestation.]

8. Open your mouth. Fold back the tongue and touch uvula with the tongue. Extend the tongue a bit more and press the uvula. Keep pressing uvula with the tongue and let air enter the Brahma randhra. Hold the air there. Then the movement of life-principle will stop.

9. Without any of those breathing exercises, if the perturbations in the heart-space can be dissolved purely by meditation, *nirvikalpa samādhi* will be attained. Movement of life-principle will be reduced by this method also.

10. Focus your sight on a spot in space twelve inches away from the nostrils. Hold your sight and mind firmly fixed there. By this way also the movement of life-principle will be reduced.

11. Instead of the *lambika yoga* described in (8) above, one can let the air enter into the Brahma Randhra through breathing exercises. Having done that, hold it stable without movement 12 inches away from the **ब्रह्म रन्ध्र** *brahma randhra*. Then the movement of life breath will recede.

12. Bring both the eyeballs together near to the center of the brows and hold the light from them (i.e. the sensory organ of vision inside) firmly at the center of brows. The movement of life-principle will be reduced.

13.Take the mind into heart-space and perform a meditation that is free of impressions. Movement of life-principle will be reduced.

14. By the grace of God or a Guru, sometimes unexpectedly Self-realization takes place. The movement of life-principle will then reduce automatically.

Interrupting Sage Vasishta's enumeration of methods for the arrest of the movement of life-principle, Rama sought some clarification.

Rama: "Sir! You mentioned heart-space. What is heart? In some places, the fleshy body part resembling a lotus bud is referred to as the heart. At some other places, the mind itself is being called the heart. Yet in some other places heart is used to indicate the Supreme Self. What is your heart according to you?"

Vasishta: "Individual's 'Heart' is of two types – 1) Acceptable and 2) Rejectable.

"The lotus bud-like fleshy heart in the chest of human beings is a Rejectable. The human mind is of limited dimensions like any other body tissue. Therefore, it is also Rejectable.

"The word heart also connotes Supreme Self based on the derivation, "Hridi ayam iti hridaya" meaning One who is within the heart. This heart is Acceptable. This heart is inside as well as outside. Hence in my opinion, if you fix your mind on an accepting heart, having freed yourself from the impressions of past lives, the movement of life-principle will be reduced.

"Rama! A number of learned people wrote about many more methods and techniques. Texts on Yoga also contain plenty of procedures. What is important is regularity of practice. You will be a Jivanmukta if the above methods are implemented observing due precautions. If you practice without developing detachment, you will be caught up in the swirl of enjoyment. Hurried implementation will lead to ill-health."

33. Ending Mind through Knowledge

Rama: "Revered Teacher! You talked of two methods for ending the mind. You have just described the first one, viz. The Path of Yoga. You said that 'Proper Vision' is the other one. 'Proper Vision' means knowledge. Please elucidate this approach."

Vasishta: "Rama!

इमा घटपटाकाराः पदार्थशतपङ्क्तयः ।
आत्मैव नान्यदस्तीति निश्चयः सम्यगीक्षणम् ।।

imā ghaṭapaṭākārāḥ padārthaśatapaṅktayaḥ |
ātmaiva nānyadastīti niścayaḥ samyagīkṣaṇam ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 70, Sloka 3

"Proper Vision is the resolve that the millions and millions of things in the visible world are Self only and that nothing else exists. This is the correct way to cognize the world. If this is cultivated, the movement of life-principle will automatically reduce."

Sage Vasishta expounded the above concept in 20 verses and closed the 79th Sarga. He seemed to be immersed in a high feeling of being in the essence of Truth as he commenced the next Sarga, the 80th. He went on addressing each sensory organ individually. He stressed that none of them perceived Truth. He pronounced that what they revealed was unreal. Skillfully substantiating the above statements, he highlighted that the knowledge obtained through the sensory organs did not provide a 'Proper Vision'.

Sage Vasishta once again established through several arguments in the 81st Sarga that there was nothing like a mind. Though it was all old wine being repeated, we, however, notice a refreshing fragrance in his presentation.

Though he preached the essence of Truth with so much of his own involvement, he closed his discourse with a muted remark as follows:

"All of this was the process adopted by the great Sage Samvarta, the elder brother of Brihaspati. He told me himself and I repeated it for your benefit."

Driven by the unsatiated love for Knowledge within him, he added:

"In times past, Sage Vitahavya too similarly educated the sensory organs on cognition of Truth. I shall describe his method also."

The description took him through 82nd and 83rd Sargas. Sage Vasishta exhibited an extra-ordinary dexterity here in his narration. He spelt out the method of Self-inquiry adopted by Sage Samvarta. He followed it up immediately with that of Sage Vitahavya. Both are based on educating the sensory system. The stories run almost parallel. There is no difference in the content. But the reader never gets bored, never feels any redundancy!

34. Similarity of Time and Space

After a very detailed exposition of the approach of Vitahavya, Sage Vasishta described the way of his (Vitahavya's) Self realization in the 84th Sarga as follows:

Vasishta: "Rama! Sage Vitahavya lived in the caves of the Vindhya Mountain Range. He inquired into Self by understanding the misleading nature of sensory inputs as we already discussed. After that, he took up uninterrupted deep meditation (Samadhi) for three hundred years. There were rains, thunderstorms, storms and floods during that time. Kings on their hunting trips, wild animals like lions and elephants visited the place. He was submerged by silt and clay after floods. He was compacted in the dried up mud following the hot season. Even then he did not stir from his meditation. After about 300 years thus, the residual current suffrage (*prārabdha*) began to act. Under its influence, he arose from his *samādhi*. A mind sprouted in him again. He began to fancy various things in his mind. His fantasizing went on for 300 years. He fancied himself to be on Mount Kailasa for a hundred years. He thought he was a Vidhyadhara in the land of Vidhyadharas for the next hundred years. Next he thought he was the Lord of gods, Devendra for five yugas.

(Note: A *yuga* is a variable length division of a *mahāyuga*. A set of four 1000 *mahāyugas* constitute a *Kalpa* which is equivalent to 4.32 billion earth years).

Rama: "How could that be, Teacher ? When the total duration of the fantasy was for only about 300 years, how could he be the Lord of gods, Devendra for five *yugas* ? How is it possible?"

Vasishta: "What sort of rules can you apply for an imaginative world? I have already told you that the mind was the name of the consciousness, which is in the process of changing into a modification, called 'thought'. The strength of consciousness formulates its own space-time rules and regulations as per the emerging thought forms.

"First of all, it was by itself a fantasy on Vitahavya's part that he thought he woke up from meditation. The period of 300 years was based on the measurement of time in that fantasy. If he thought that he visited some other worlds, it was simply one more fantasy within a fantasy. The rules of physics and dynamics for the modifications of consciousness in the second fantasy were different. It was five yugas as per the reference frame of the second fantasy. To confound it further, he imagined during that fantasy that he served Shiva for another yuga as one of the Ganapathis in Shivloka (abode of Shiva). But surprise of surprises, he remained a Jivanmukta in spite of so many fantasies ! There was no change in his state!!"

Rama: "Sir, if it is said that a *jīvanmukta* fantasizes, implicitly it amounts to saying that he is vulnerable to bondage and liberation. How will he be a *jīvanmukta* if he is still subject to bondage and liberation?"

Vasishta: "It is wrong to assume that the world is not visible to *jīvanmuktas*. The entire world appears as pure Brahman (Pure Consciousness). The *jīvanmuktas* also experience sorrows and happiness in a similar way as they did in the past. The difference is that these experiences will be like burnt out seeds. Their actions do not create new impressions. Sage Vitahavya visited various worlds in that fashion. He had gone through sorrows and happiness. Not only that, the same individual (*jīva*) that was the Lord of gods for five yugas later became a king in a small kingdom. He is now about to go on a campaign (war). The swan that was Ganadhipati's pet during the time he was in Shivaloka, happens now to be the king of a country called Nishadha."

Rama: "Oh, oh! Hold it Sir! You said a while ago that various worlds as well as the space-time rules and regulations in them were sheer imagination of Vitahavya. How can the imaginary beings from the fictional creation of an individual become embodied beings in this world?"

Vasishta: "Rama, I have told you a number of times that this visible world is also a fictional creation of a mind! I also said that the very mind, which had been the first cause of this creation, too was itself a fiction. When that is a fact, how can you consider this world as solid and firm? The world appears solid to you because of the fact that your mind has not yet been firm in its understanding that the visible world is also a fantasy of the mind. The world will continue to appear concrete to you as long as it is so. You think that individuals belonging to other worlds cannot penetrate into it. This is also a fantasy. When once you determine that the entire thing is a fiction, none of these questions arise."

Rama: "Revered Teacher, I could follow what you say! What you said would be perfectly valid if we understand that the framework of rules as applicable to 'time' is also applicable to 'space.' So far so good. But what did Vitahavya do with all his fantasies?"

Vasishta: "When Vitahavya was a Pramatha Ganapathi in the land of Shivaloka, he wished to see all his past lives. He began to visualize the past. In the stream of his visualizations, he saw his body buried in mud with some bush covering it. On seeing the buried body, his thoughts were arrested. He wanted to reenter that body. But he found the body to be totally disintegrated. He did not consider it fit for reentry. A desire for attaining liberation without body (videhamukti) sprouted in him. But at the same time the remaining current suffrage (*prārabdha*) was preventing it. He thought of a way to resolve the conflict. He noticed God Sun and Pingala (a person in the service of Sun) above in the sky.

"Vitahavya felt that Sun and Pingala could help him to pull out the body buried in the mud. Vitahavya assumed a subtle body and entered the Sun. Sun observed what was going on and understood the intentions of the sage. So he signaled Pingala, his Aide, to help the sage. Immediately Vitahavya left Sun and entered Pingala's body. Pingala's gross body now consisted of two subtle bodies. Pingala came down to the earth, reached the place where Vitahavya's body was buried on the Vindhya Mountain Range, dug it out with his fingers and nails and restored it to its previous health by his power of *Yoga*.

"The subtle body of Vitahavya separated out of Pingala and entered the restored body. The restored body stood up as Vitahavya. Vitahavya and Pingala bowed to each other. Pingala flew back into the sky. Vitahavya took off for a bath. He spent the rest of the day wandering around the hills. He strongly desired to get back into meditation by evening because his past impressions acted on him! He looked around for a suitable cave in the hills, settled down there in a lotus posture and meditated. His deep meditation comprised a thorough probing into Truth. It went on for six days. He was so focused that he was unaware of his body too.

"Vitahavya awoke from his meditation at the end of six days. But he found himself in a strange state. It was not like being awake. It was more like sleep. The state was more like a siesta taken under the shade of a tree after walking for a long distance on a hot summer day by a traveler. He used to get into Knowledge-based-Samadhi (Jnana Samadhi) and come out of it occasionally. He spent part of his time in Samadhi and part of the time just wandering around. Whatever he might have been doing, he never desired anything in his mind.

He never blamed anything. He was not happy nor was he sad. He lived thus as a *jīvanmukta* for 30,000 years. He enjoyed talking to his senses. He educated his senses about the bliss he enjoyed. At times, he appeared to argue with his senses. His current suffrage (*prārabdha*) was exhausted in this way. At the end of it, he decided to give up the body and merge in Aloneness (*videhamukti*).

"Soon Vitahavya assumed the lotus posture, called each of his senses, taught them Knowledge (about their real nature) and commanded each to merge with their cause. He ordered, "Oh, Organ of Vision! Go and merge in the Sun. Oh, olfactory sense! Join the Earth.

Oh, Life-breath! Combine with the mighty winds. Oh, Auditory sense! Unite with space. Oh, Sense of Gustation! Dissolve in water. 'I', who has been a mirror reflection so far, is going to amalgamate with the main Object, the Supreme Consciousness."

"Gradually he gave up directing his sensory organs. He began reciting AUM slowly to start with, then in a loud voice and finally in lengthening sounds. While reciting AUM, he freed himself from the veil of illusion using the technique of Superimposition and its reversal (*adhyāropapavada vidhana*) and he almost reached Self-realization. He firmed up his position in that state. The sound of AUM also receded."

[Note: *adhyāropa* refers to the process of contemplation on the way Self gets superimposed by the Unmanifested (*avyakta*), Intellectual Principle (*mahat*, the source of I-consciousness), I-consciousness, Five Elements etc. in tandem one over other. *apavāda* refers to the process of eliminating each layer in the reverse order (from gross to the subtle) determining that Truth is not that particular layer (*na iti or neti*)].

"As he proceeded contemplating in that fashion, he had a sudden feel of a brilliant luminescence. He had an experiential feeling that he crossed both light and darkness. That is the point of transcending the mind. One may compare that state to an unmoving stable mass of wind. This is the state of Mere Witness (*sakśibhūta*).

"The states attained by Sage Vitahavya so far were the Sixth and Seventh of the Seven Steps of Knowledge-based Yoga. With increasing stability in them, he progressed on to the Turiya state. In the state of Turiya, there is only the bliss of the Supreme Self.. It is not the kind of happiness derived from worldly objects. One will be in Supreme Existence (*sadrūpa*), without anything existing separate from him. It is the state of Supreme Consciousness; there's nothing, which is non-Consciousness.

"That state of Perfection is the final state. That is the Void (*sūnyatva*) of the *sūnyavadins* (Void school of thought); Brahman of the Vedantins; Wisdom of the logicians (*vijnāna vadins*); Purusha of *sānkhyavādins*; Eswara of *yogis*; The Shiva of *śaivaites*; time of the *kālavādin*; Self of Knowers of Self; *nairātmya* of *sautantrika vaibhāśikas*; Void between Consciousness and non-Consciousness of the Middle grounders (*mādhyamikas*); substance par excellence of the liberated Oneness believers (*sarva samatā vadins*)."

(Note: *nairātmya* refers to a flow of momentary flashes of wisdom. The *sautantrika vaibhāśikas* hold that the Supreme state does not last forever).

We find here that Sage Valmiki alluded by name to each of the then prevailing schools of thought on Self in order to describe the state of Liberation without body (*videhamukti*) of Sage Vitahavya. We also notice that he arranged them in a specific order. His description started with the Void of Sunyavadins and culminated finally with the State of Perfection of the Jivanmuktas. The poet, thereby, sagaciously indicated to us that those are the two extreme viewpoints of argument and all others are of varying shades in-between.

Let us now resume the story of Vitahavya.

As he reached the state beyond *turīya*, the life-principle (*prāna*) from all his nerves converged at the heart. The life-principle is united with the five elements. The gross body remained just as it was. Completing the description of Sage Vitahavya's liberation without body, Sage Vasishta remarked as follows:

Vasishta: "Rama! I told you in detail the way Vitahavya attained liberation following the Path of Knowledge. Therefore, you should also take up knowledge-path."

35. A Dream within a Dream – Fancy within a Fancy

Rama: "Sir! Vitahavya built an imaginary world in his mind. Based on the power of Yoga that he practiced in the imaginary world, he could enter God Sun. With the help of Pingala, the Aide of Sun, he got his old body lying in the Vindhya Ranges extracted. He got it repaired and re-entered it. This amounts to saying that the practices observed in an imaginary world yield benefits in our world. Is this possible?"

Vasishta: "Rama! You still seem to be under the impression that the mental construct of the imaginative world of Vitahavya and the world we live in are different. That is not correct. Putting it in proper perspective, this Vitahavya whom we feel we perceive is in fact a part of our own mental construct. Hence we may say that Vitahavya was your mind! The truth is that it is your mind that appears as yourself, me and this entire visible world. We cannot really say that differences exist or do not exist between various entities. Differences can be spoken of with respect to True substances; but not with respect to unreal things. So we have to consider that the imaginary world of Vitahavya is no more than a part of the world of our own mental construct, the world we conceive of and perceive. Vitahavya's world was not different from ours. Therefore, your question is not valid!"

[Note: We saw that two imaginary kingdoms conceived by two different individuals merged into one another in the story of Sage Gadhi. It was, however, not emphasized there that the mental construct of others was also a part of our conception. We may infer that Sage Vasishta explicates this specific standpoint through the present story.)

Rama: "Revered Teacher! I have one more question. How is it that we do not see occult powers (*divya śakti*) like the ability of space travel in many of the *jīvanmuktas* who gained full knowledge of the Self?"

Vasishta: "Occult powers accrue through a variety of means. They are inborn to the divine class. The powers will be coterminous with their continuance in the divine body. The occult powers are not an automatic outcome for Self-knowing persons. They can obtain them if they desire so. Gemstones, charms, herbs etc. aid in obtaining the occult powers.

There is no rule that a person has to be a *jīvanmukta* to attain them. You needn't even be a human being to attain some of the powers. For example, don't the mosquitoes fly in the air ?

"A spiritual aspirant seeking Knowledge of the Self does not bother himself with these powers. He knows that such powers are part of nescience. He considers them 'unreal'. 'Unreal' here means that they do not have true existence; they are like 'the horn of a hare'. He does not waste time on acquiring such powers as he is focused on wiping out nescience totally. If at all a Self-knowing person does wish to possess these powers because of some residual current suffrage (*prārabdha*), he can surely acquire them with the aid of gemstones, charms, herbs etc. But a *jīvanmukta* hardly desires anything. Nor does he refuse anything. The occult powers do not facilitate liberation. Hence many of the *jīvanmuktas* do not run after them. In our story of Vitahavya, he did not acquire occult powers because he did not desire such powers. He wanted liberation. Hence he achieved liberation."

Rama: "Revered Teacher! Why was not the body of Vitahavya buried in mud devoured by some wild animals or cannibals? Why did it not even rot? How could it be repaired so easily after Pingala extracted it ? He could not obtain liberation though he had practiced for billions of years in his past lives. But he achieved liberation within a short time after entering the repaired body. How did this happen?

Vasishta: "Let me answer your first question first as to why germs, wild animals or cannibals did not consume Vitahavya's body buried in earth. Suppose you are on your way to a neighboring village. On the way you encounter a person whom you do not like. Your mind would boil with anger. After proceeding further, say, you meet with a friend of yours. Your mind would dance with delight. After traveling some more distance you see a mountain peak. Do you feel in your mind either anger or delight seeing the mountain peak ? Neither. Why ?

"Your enemy had hatred for you. As your mind approached his feeling (bhavana) of hatred, it too was filled with hatred. Your friend had a feeling of amity towards you. As your mind approached this feeling, it was filled with camaraderie. The mountain peak had neither friendship nor enmity. So there was no scope for any modification in your mind as it neared the mountain peak. Therefore, when your mind viewed the mountain peak, it was free of both attachment and hatred.

"When you see an apple, you are attracted to it . That was because you had already got an idea in you that it was edible. If you see a fruit of soapnut (Botanical name: Sapindus emarginatus), you do not like to eat it because you know that it would be bitter. If you come across an unknown fruit, you would be neither attracted towards it nor repelled by it because you do not have a priori information on it. That is how the mind works.

"Advanced Yogis who are well established in Yoga reach a state transcending both attachment and aversion. If a new mind joins them, neither attachment nor repulsion enters their mind. Neither desire nor disgust will enter. Texts on Yoga too confirm this. '**तत् संनिधौ वैर त्यागः**' '*tat saṇnidhau vaira tyāgaḥ*' is a Yogic aphorism. It means that even wild animals lose their enmity in the presence of yogis. What happened in the case of Vitahavya's body too was the same. Because he reached a stage beyond love-hate relationships, worms, animals or cannibals never thought of eating the body. Therefore, the body stayed as it was.

"Your second question was why the body did not rot. Vitahavya followed Samadhi yoga and attained Saamyavastha. Then he left that body and assumed some other bodies. So the question is why did not the gross body rot after the subtle body had left it.

"Well, let us first understand what rotting is. Rot is a movement. Movement is a vibration. Vibration is of two types – (i) Internal Vibration and (ii) External Vibration. Internal vibration comprises the movement of mind. Movements like that of the life-breath and other winds caused by mind also form Internal vibrations. External vibration is the movement of the gross body caused by the life-breath and other winds. Any body having both the vibrations will gradually wither away. In the absence of both of these vibrations, any body stays like a rock even after a thousand years. This fact is also established by the texts of *yoga*.

"Vitahavya's subtle body leaving the gross body, assumption of newer bodies, re-entering the old body etc. were all part of the experiential play of his mind. But because his mind had already by then transcended both types of movement, his body stayed like a rock without undergoing any change.

"Your third question was how Vitahavya achieved liberation soon after he entered the old body. The concept of obtaining sooner or later is irrelevant in respect of liberation without body. A mind lost in the cycle of births and deaths (samsara) unexpectedly lands on Truth as it strives on in its quest. It happened so with Vitahavya. Elders often say,

तुषेण बद्धो व्रीहिः स्यात्तुषाभावे तु तण्डुलः ।
पाशबद्धः सदा जीवः पाशमुक्तः सदा शिवः ॥

tuṣeṇa baddho vrīhi: syāttuṣābhāve tu taṇḍula: |
pāśabaddhaḥ sadā jīvaḥ pāśamuktaḥ sadā śiva: ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 89, Sloka 37 commentary

"It is paddy if the husk is there. If the husk is removed, it is rice. Similarly, if bondage exists, he is an individual (jiva); if the bondage is gone, he is everlasting Shiva.

"An individual free of bondage is equivalent to Shiva. The following statement from Vedas also affirms the same fact:

"तस्य ह व देवाश्च न भूत्य इसते अत्मःयेषं स भवति "

"*tasya ha va devāśca na bhūtya isate atmaḥyeṣaṃ sa bhavati "*

"Even gods cannot reach the greatness of a *jīvanmukta.* He is the Self in them."

"Therefore, a *jīvanmukta* who is Shiva himself can obtain liberation without the body whenever he wishes so. Nobody can predict when he would desire to do so. It happens effortlessly. Hence nobody can forecast the time of liberation without the body (*videhamukti*).

"When Vitahavya's mind in the form of bondage was annihilated, his inquiry into Self intensified. It resulted in noble qualities like universal affection (maitri) described in Yogic texts."

36. Ending Mind with and without Retention of Form

Rama: "Just a second Sir ! On one hand you say that the mind was annihilated. On the other hand you say that noble qualities like universal affection have arisen. When the mind itself was gone, where could these noble qualities reside?"

Vasishta: "Annihilation of mind is of two types. One is 'Annulment of Mind With Retention of Form'. The other is 'Annulment of Mind Without Retention of Form'. The annihilation of the mind of the Jivanmuktas is of the first type. Videhamuktas achieve the other type of annihilation. Vitahavya obtained annihilation with retention of form at that time. Hence universal affection and other good qualities were generated in it."

Rama: "Sorry, Sir! I am unable to follow. What is it meant by Annulment of mind ? How could there be a form for a mind that is destroyed? How can a mind that is destroyed function again? Please explain a bit more."

Vasishta: "Rama!

सुखदुःखदशा धीरं साम्यान्न प्रोद्धरन्ति यम् ।
निःश्वासा इव शैलेन्द्रं चित्तं तस्य मृतं विदुः ।।

sukhaduḥkhadaśā dhīraṃ sāmyānna proddharanti yam |
niḥśvāsā iva śailendraṃ cittaṃ tasya mṛtaṃ viduḥ ||

Upasama prakarana, sarga 90, Sloka 12

"An annulled or annihilated or 'Calmed Down Mind' is the mind of a steadfast person whose equipoise is not disturbed by external conditions of sorrow or happiness just like a mountain does not get affected by the inhalation and exhalation of a man.

"His is a 'Calmed Down Mind' whose expansiveness is not reduced by delimiting concepts of 'we-they'.

"His mind is a 'Calmed Down Mind', if his face does not alter in expression under conditions of pleasure or peril, treasure or threat; incentives or impediments.

"I trust it is now clear to you, Rama! This explains the state of things with respect to 'Annulment of Mind With Retention of Form'. This is the condition of the mind of a Jivanmukta. In this state he gets rid of the idea that the world is True. His mind shines forth in its Pure, Pristine and True form. Living in this condition with the Mind annulled but retaining its form is described by some as Mind-Form Beingness (*chitta satta*). Virtues like universal affection take root in such a mind.

"It is termed as an annihilated or 'Calmed down mind' because the impressions of past births are almost extinguished in it. A few impressions may still be present, but they are not strong enough to cause re-birth. These residual impressions find expression during the non-meditative (*vyutthāna*) state of the *jīvanmukta*. Therefore, it amounts to say that his mind has some form, though negligible. Hence the name "Annulment of Mind with Retention of Form." Only such a mind has the capacity for action in the world. The qualities like universal affection etc. will come handy in the performance of actions.

"As far as "Annulment of Mind Without Retention of Form" is concerned, it is a state obtained only in liberation without the body. There is no question of any impressions being residual in this state. Hence neither virtuous qualities like universal affection nor performance of actions related to them exist.

"I take it that you understand clearly now about annihilation of the mind."

37. Seeds of the Tree of Phantasmagoria

Rama: "Sir, I understood about annihilation of mind. But I still have a lingering doubt about the mind itself. If we consider the cycle of births and deaths (*samsāra*) as a tree, what is the seed for it? If we suppose that a seed exists, there has to be another seed preceding it and so on. It becomes an infinite regress ! So what is the origin?"

Vasishta: "Rama! You are able to see the gross body. The cause for the gross body is the subtle body (*linga śarīra*) inside carrying the impressions of past lives. The subtle body keeps producing newer and newer bodies under the influence of past impressions.

"A mind having desires is the cause for the subtle body. You may question how a mind having desires can cause a body. Does not the mind produce a variety of bodies during a dream? In a similar way, the mind is the seed for the subtle body.

"There are two seeds for the mind, not one! The first one is 'Vibrations of Life-principle' or in other words the movement of life-breath. The second is 'Intense Intent' or in other words impressions of past lives.

"Mind manifests when life-breath passes through the 72,000 celestial nerves (the Yogic celestial nerves are invisible to the naked eye and are different from the physiological nervous system). Thoughts do not occur if the breath does not move around. We recognize the movement of life-principle only through the mind. Thoughts in the mind are indicative of the vibrations in life-principle.

"It holds true in respect of Hiranyagarbha also. Collective Vibrations of everybody's life-principle cause the mind of Hiranyagarbha to give rise to the world. (Hiranyagarbha was the first individual (*jīva*)). The world will Dissolve when the vibrations of everybody's life-principles cease operating for a short interval. It is liberation when once the vibrations are permanently eliminated. Elders say that one can obtain liberation by arresting the vibration of the life-principle. That is the reason why Yogis undertake breath control and other related exercises.

"I have already said that the second source for the genesis of mind is 'Intense Intent'. 'Intense Intent' is nothing but the impressions from past lives acting.

दृढभावनया त्यक्तपूर्वापरविचारणम् ।
यदादानं पदार्थस्य वासना सा प्रकीर्तिता ।।

dṛḍhabhāvanayā tyaktapūrvāparavicāraṇam |
yadādānaṃ padārthasya vāsanā sā prakīrtitā ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 91, Sloka 29

"You will not find anything in this world to be true if you do a diligent analysis. An individual believes in sensory organs and accepts what is perceived through them as real without any further inquiry. He talks in terms of 'Me' and 'not Me'; 'Mine' and 'not Mine'. The reason for such unquestioning acceptance is grounded on Intent, which is carried forward from past births. Conceptions brought forward from past lives govern our current perception with added new flavors. The new imprinted flavors are 'Me', 'Mine', 'Useful', 'Useless' and so on. Therefore, they are known as "Impressions (*vāsana*)." *vāsana* is derived from '*vāsayati iti vāsana*' or that which gives a flavor.

"An individual may have a body and other worldly possessions like a house. He may not be possessed by the feeling of 'Me – Mine' through a detailed inquiry into what is seen and what really exists beyond the apparently visible things. Such an individual is considered to be devoid of any impressions. A man will certainly be what he intensely intends to be. It is the Law of the world !

असम्यग्दर्शनं यस्मादनात्मन्यात्मभावनम् ।
यदवस्तुनि वस्तुत्वं तच्चित्तं विद्धि राघव ।।

asamyagdarśanaṃ yasmādanātmanyātmabhāvanam |
yadavastuni vastutvaṃ taccittaṃ viddhi rāghava ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 91, Slokla 34

"Mind is the one that causes a loss in obtaining a proper perspective. Mind is the one that makes him think that he is what he really is not; mind is the reason for conceiving what is untrue to be true! I repeat once again. The feeling that the objects of the world are real is mind. That is the reason why I said that Intent was the second source for mind.

"Both the seeds of mind have a strange interconnection. If one is destroyed, the other automatically gets destroyed. Both seeds are necessary for the genesis of mind. Either of them alone is not adequate. If you have to store water in a pot, after all you need space in the pot and a source of water! So also for the genesis of mind, you need the vibration of life-force and Intense Intention. Hence with the destruction of one, the other necessarily goes. Expressed differently, each acts as the seed for the other. It is called "The Doctrine of Seed and Shoot."

"The objective world of sound, touch etc. is the seed for both of them. By renouncing the objects of the world, vibration of the life-force as well as Intense intention are lost. Do you now appreciate what renouncing the world is? It is to contemplate that all the perceived objects are nothing but a form of Consciousness and they are not different from Consciousness. It is referred to by the name "*samvedya tyāga* (Renouncing what is known)."

"You may think that mind being sentient and objects being insentient, how could mind and objects be the same? Let us say that a person witnessed his own death in his dream. Or he visualized a rope as a snake. How does it happen like this? There is sentience in your mind. An image gets generated because of sentience. You get an experiential feeling of witnessing an object. There is no other ground for the image to take place. Hence it is not wrong to consider them as modifications of the sentience in your mind. Now extend this logic to the visible world. This whole web of universe is also a phantasmagoria. Hence it is a modification of the sentience in the mind of Hiranyagarbha. Now, is it incorrect to say that mind and objects are indistinguishable?

"Develop the faculty (*anusandhāna*) of convergence that whatever may be the object (*samvedya*) perceived, it is no more than a modification of sentience in mind (*samvit*). As this faculty grows, you will perceive less and less of samvedya. Ability to cognize sentience (*samvedana, chaitanya*) also improves. It is finally liberation when the visible world (phantasmagoria) totally gets obliterated through non-perception.

असंवित्तिरजाड्यस्था सुखायाजननात्मने ।
अजडो गलितानन्दस्त्यक्तसंवेदनो भव ।

asaṃvittirajāḍyasthā sukhāyājananātmane |
ajaḍo galitānandastyaktasaṃvedano bhava |

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 91, Sloka 77

"If non-perception of objects gets firmly established in the essence of consciousness, that is to say if the essence of insentience-free chaitanya gets stabilized, then you will attain eternal bliss. Hence, Rama, get rid of insentience (*jadatva*). Leave out sentience (*samvedana*) too. Thus be a perfectly blissful being!"

[Note: The poet used the word '*galitānandah*' in the above verse. The normal meaning of the term is 'one who does not have happiness.' If we attribute this meaning, we have to understand it to imply one who does not have happiness derived through senses. The commentator (Shri ABS) opines that it is better to interpret the term to mean one who attained perfection by the application of figure of speech, synecdoche (*lakshana vritti*) for the word '*galita*' to represent perfection.]

Rama: "Sir ! By your advice

'**अजडो गलितानन्दस्त्यक्तसंवेदनो भव**' '*ajaḍo galitānandastyaktasaṃvedano bhava*',

you are rejecting both sentience and insentience ! A given substance can either be inert or sentient. How is it possible to be neither ?"

Vasishta: "You do not seem to interpret the word 'सम्वेदन' '*samvedana*' correctly when I say 'त्यक्तसंवेदनो भव' *'tyaktasaṃvedano bhava'*. *Samvedana* is to consider the external objects as real. *Samvedana* does not here mean pure Consciousness, as you seem to imply. A *jīvanmukta* who understood Truth would not consider external objects as True. Therefore, a *jīvanmukta* is '*tyaktasaṃvedana*' – one who is free of *saṃvedana*. What remains after leaving *saṃvedana* is only Pure Consciousness. Therefore, he is not inert."

Rama: "Such *jīvanmukta's* mind perceives Brahman only and hence their mind has a modification in the form of Brahman. This would imply that they have '*samvedana*'. How can we attribute '*tyaktasaṃvedana'* to them?"

Vasishta: "The modification of their mind in the form of Brahman gradually merges in Brahman. So even that modification disappears along with its cause. Hence they will not have even that type of *samvedana*. You should obtain that state! We have been talking about a chain of seeds. I said in that context that the combined source of vibration of life-breath and Intense Intention was the seed of worldly objects. Another name for the objects is *samvedya*, as I told you. We established that the seed for samvedya was samvit, the sentience in the mind.

"The seed for *samvit* is *sanmātra*. *sanmātra* stands for 'just beingness' i.e. Pure Existence. Existence is of two types. One is multi-form and the other is single-form.

"Multi-form existence is beingness in the form of, say, a pot, a stone, a tree, a heap, or any other shape. The single-form existence is beingness without any differences within it. The whole Existence is a single block. "The multi-form existence is not True. Single-form existence is the Real One. It is Eternal Beingness.

Viewed from a different angle, we may notionally divide True beingness into '*kālasatta* (time dependent beingness)' and '*vastusatta* (object dependent beingness)'. If the division is based on time (past, present and future), it is called '*kālasatta*'. In this classification, True beingness is only the Present Beingness. Past beingness and future beingness are untrue.

vastusatta is beingness dependent on things. In this classification, only *ātmasatta* (beingness dependent on Self) is True.

"There are many other ways of classifying beingness. You have to appreciate that you should cognize the 'commonality of beingness (*satta sāmānya*)' in all varieties of beingness irrespective of any classification. You should concentrate on the commonality. Perfect beatitude is obtained from such concentration only. The primary cause for the 'commonality of beingness' is the Supreme Self (Brahman). In fact it is not different from the Supreme Self. There is nothing more fundamental than that.

"I hope you have understood everything. Your question was about the causative factors for the visible world. We arrived at the following sequence of causes in our discussion:

Gross Body > Subtle Body > Mind > Vibration of Life Breath,
and
Intense Intent > Objects of Samvedya > Attributeless Brahman

"We also concluded that the origination of the Supreme Brahman is acausal, and Brahman is the root, the prime cause for all causes.

38. Getting Rid of the Seed of Phantasmagoria

Rama: "Revered Teacher! Which is the most important cause of this causal chain? By removing which cause, can we be easily free of the cycle of births and deaths ?"

Vasishta: "In the causal chain, each succeeding cause is more powerful than the preceding one. Each time, hold on to the higher cause and get rid of the lower one. We already said that Ultra Pure Supreme Brahman was the final cause. Keep your mind focused on it if you can. Keep focused till you have the experiential understanding of Truth.

"If you are unable to do so, hold onto the cause one below that, i.e. satta samanya (commonality of beingness). Meditate on it. If you are incapable of it, then meditate on Samvedya (objects). But there is a little problem here. You can never hold on to samvedya which is free of dependence on samvit. Hence it is not possible to meditate on pure samvedya. What you have to do is to inquire into the reasons for samvedya and focus the mind on the causal factor of the world. It means that you have to determine what is the "**this**-ness" in statements like '**this** is pot', '**this** is cot' etc. Focus then your mind on 'thisness' and meditate.

"Otherwise, find out what is meant by 'thou' in the Vedic statement "thou art that" ('**तत् त्वम् असि**' '*tat tvam asi*'). Focus your mind on your finding and meditate.

"If that is also not possible, you may meditate on the pair of vibration of life-principle and Intense Intention. This involves stopping the vibration of life-breath and getting rid of impressions. In order to achieve any one of these, it will be necessary to control the mind which is the preceding seed in the causal chain. For the purpose of adopting as a practice, the tripartite combination of arresting the vibration of life-breath, getting rid of impressions and control of mind constitutes one single step. Out of the three, getting rid of impressions is the most arduous task. It is like uprooting the Himalayas. The problem is one cannot get rid of impressions unless the mind is annihilated; and the mind cannot be annihilated until the impressions are nullified. It is like saying that a person cannot be cured of his lunacy till he is married and he cannot get married unless he is cured of lunacy. A catch-22 situation.

"What can resolve the difficulty is the Knowledge of Truth. In order to obtain Knowledge of Truth, one may initially begin with a study of scriptural texts. Such a study calms down the mind to some extent. With increasing quietening of the mind, one progresses in getting rid of impressions. That will in turn firm up the knowledge gained.

`"Therefore, Rama, practice all the three together! A condition to be observed upfront is to leave desire for comfort and enjoyment.

तत्त्वज्ञानं मनोनाशो वासनाक्षय एव च ।
मिथः कारणतां गत्वादुःसाध्यानि स्थितान्यतः ।।
तस्माद्राघव यत्नेन पौरुषेण विवेकिना ।
भोगेच्छां दूरतस्त्यक्त्वा त्रयमेतत्समाश्रयेत् ।।

tattvajñānaṃ manonāśo vāsanākṣaya eva ca |
mithaḥ kāraṇatāṃ gatvāduḥsādhyāni sthitānyataḥ ||
tasmādrāghava yatnena pauruṣeṇa vivekinā |
bhogecchāṃ dūratastyaktvā trayametatsamāśrayet ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 92 - Sloka 14, 15

"Let me stress once again.

वासनाक्षयविज्ञानमनोनाशा महामते ।
समकालं चिराभ्यस्ता भवन्ति फलदा मुने ।।

vāsanākṣayavijñānamanonāśā mahāmate |
samakālaṃ cirābhyastā bhavanti phaladā mune ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 92, Sloka 17

"You will achieve Reduction of impressions, Knowledge of Truth and Annihilation of mind only if the three are simultaneously practiced equally. If they are practiced separately, the effect will be like a single soldier going each time to seize an enemy fort. It is not advisable to do so. So practice non-stop all the three together at all times – whether eating, walking, sitting, standing, sleeping or working – irrespective of what you are doing.

"Rama! We talked about the way to meditate on the pair of vibration of life-breath and Intense Intention. We said that the combination of arresting vibrations of life-breath, getting rid of impressions and control of mind forms one single step. We also said that in order to be free of impressions, one has to practice reduction of impressions, obtaining knowledge of Truth and annihilation of the mind simultaneously.

"Now we have to discuss the way of arresting the vibration of life-breath. It is equivalent to getting rid of impressions.

वासनासंपरित्यागाच्चित्तं गच्छत्यचित्तताम् ।
प्राणस्पन्दनिरोधाच्च यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ।।

vāsanāsaṃparityāgāccittaṃ gacchatyacittatām |
prāṇaspandanirodhācca yathecchasi tathā kuru ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 92, Sloka 26

"There are two ways to null the mind. One is giving up impressions and the other is arresting vibrations of life-breath. Follow the way you prefer.

"You have to practice breath control etc. to arrest the vibration of life-breath. But those techniques will be inadequate by themselves. You may have to learn many other procedures from knowledgeable Gurus. You have to follow very rigorous dietary restrictions.

"The methods available to get rid of impressions are:

1. Learn to cognize behind everything that Pure Existence (**सन्मात्र स्वरुप** *sanmātra svarūpa*) which remains unchanged at the beginning, in the middle and at the end.

2. **निःसङ्गव्यवहारित्वाद्भवभावनवर्जनात् ।**
शरीरनाशदर्शित्वाद्वासना न प्रवर्तते ।

niḥsaṅgavyavahāritvādbhavabhāvanavarjanāt |
śarīranāśadarśitvādvāsanā na pravartate |

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 92, Sloka 30

There are three steps in this method.

a) Be detached in your actions. It means do not develop cordiality with worldly people. Do not entertain any intentions.

b) Do not keep on musing over what had already happened. You should not regurgitate the very same old issues. Do not run after your desires.

c) Never forget that the body is perishable.

Impression will not be able to cling on to you if you follow the above steps.

It is not possible to control the mind without skillful use of these techniques.

न शक्यते मनो जेतुं विना युक्तिमनिन्दिताम् ।।

na śakyate mano jetuṃ vinā yuktimaninditām ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 92, Slokla 34

"The skill lies in the following foursome:

अध्यात्मविद्याधिगमः साधुसङ्गम एव च ।।
वासनासंपरित्यागः प्राणस्पन्दनिरोधनम् ।
एतास्ता युक्तयः पुष्टाः सन्ति चित्तजये किल ।।

adhyātmavidyādhigamaḥ sādhusaṅgama eva ca ||
vāsanāsaṃparityāgaḥ prāṇaspandanirodhanam |
etāstā yuktayaḥ puṣṭāḥ santi cittajaye kila ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 92, Sloka 36

(i) Study of Scriptures and Upanishads (ii) Association with Noble Persons.
(iii) Abandonment of Impressions. (iv) Arrest of the Vibrations of Life-breath.

The above four mutually strengthen each other. All of them together help in the annihilation of the mind. Skill lies in practicing all the four together. There is no other way. Steadfast Pranic Exercises (*Hatha Yoga*) are of no use.

"Hence Rama, Please do follow the four methods diligently. The trick in successfully practicing them lies in getting rid of attachment. Therefore, get rid of attachment first."

Rama: "What is 'Attachment', Sir?"

Vasishta: "Rama! Attachment is also an impression !

भावाभावे पदार्थानां हर्षामर्षविकारदा ।
मलिना वासना यैषा सा सङ्ग इति कथ्यते ।।

bhāvābhāve padārthānāṃ harṣāmarṣavikāradā |
malinā vāsanā yaiṣā sā saṅga iti kathyate ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 93, Sloka 84

"If there is some sort of a blemish in the mind, it produces happiness in combination with some substances and sorrow in combination with some others. The tainted impression that is causal in bringing about such changes is called 'attachment'.

"Acts performed with that blemish bind the doer.

"There is a different type of impression in the mind of *jīvanmuktas*. Because of that, they do not distinguish between happiness and sorrow. Such a pure unstained impression is called Non-attachment. Acts performed with Non-attachment do not bind the doer.

"Hence Rama, be free of the tainted impression of attachment. Perform your action with non-attachment. Strive to be a *jīvanmuktas*. Practice Self-Inquiry, Meditation and Reduction of Impressions simultaneously so that you may become a *jīvanmukta*. You will have an experiential understanding of Self by this method. You will attain a permanent blissful state of Brahman."

Blessing thus, Sage Vasishta closed the Chapter on Upasama – The Calm Down.

Before we take up the next Chapter Nirvana, let us review the content of the current Chapter.

39. Brief Review of The Chapter: The Calm Down (Upasama)

The arrangement of Chapters in Yoga Vasishta corresponds to the Vedic dictum,

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते ।येन जातानि जीवन्ति ।

yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | yena jātāni jīvanti |

After an initial Introductory comes the Chapter on Creation. Next comes the Chapter on Sustenance. The Chapter on Creation deals with the origination of the Universe. The Chapter on Sustenance deals with how the Universe is sustained.

The above quoted Vedic statement goes on to say:

यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।

yatprayantyabhisaṃviśanti |

(meaning that into which the Universe merges).

Therefore, the Chapter coming after Sustenance has to discuss dissolution of the Universe. But the world will not disappear as long as the mind exists. This was stated at the beginning of this Chapter itself. Therefore, it is necessary to end the mind first in order to end the universe. Accordingly, Sage Vasishta's teaching in this Chapter comprises an elaborate exposition on the ways and means of ending the mind.

An explanation of the theoretical underpinning of the subject matter, Philosophical Wisdom, was completed with the Chapter on Sustenance. What remained to be covered was a discussion on the methods of nulling the mind. Hence, Sage Vasishta began the current Chapter saying that "What originated and what grew up was nothing but mind."

Sage Vasishta later discussed the issue of "Non-doership." He followed it by spelling out suitable techniques for the liberation of individuals with Satvic and Rajasic qualities. He narrated in this context the story of Janaka and the Saintly Songs to illustrate how a person might get liberated even without a Guru. Liberation could come about like a bolt from the blue suddenly triggered by strange unexpected events owing to the meritorious deeds in past lives.

As per this story, Janaka, King of Videha, heard some songs sung by a few holy saints while he was on a casual stroll. The songs kick-started several thoughts in him and finally led him to liberation.

Sage Vasista then explained what was mind. He said that there were two methods of getting rid of past impressions. They were "Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions", and "Wisdom-based Eradication of Impressions." He added that the former was applicable to a *jīvanmukta* and the latter to the person who was liberated without the body.

The sage said that every individual was related to every other in this world in some birth or the other. He added that it was unwise to limit our relationships only to a few people known to us in this birth. He told the story of "Punya and Paavana" as an example. Strictly speaking, there was not much of a story in it. Sage Vasishta depicted the philosophical and contemplative dialogue of two holy and austere brothers who all of a sudden lost their parents. He established through this story that an ability to think beyond, transcending the immediate relationships, constituted a valid tool for achieving liberation.

It is also possible for an individual to achieve Self-realization spurred unexpectedly by one's own introspective thoughts on Self duly strengthened by timely instructions of a Guru. In support of this, Sage Vasishta described in detail how Emperor Bali went about in his thinking and how his Guru, Sukracharya helped him.

Worship of a beloved deity too could help in achieving Self-realization. This point was illustrated through the phase of Prahlada's life subsequent to the appearance of Lord Nrisimha.

Sage Vasishta dealt principally with philosophical issues in the story of Emperor Bali. He expounded on the subtle relationship between devotional and philosophical approaches in the story of Prahlada. He described at this point the procedures to be followed by idol worshippers. He advised that they should perform their prayer with the concept of "I am He." He propounded that the existence of wicked creatures was necessary for the betterment of human beings who would have to achieve liberation.

Sage Vasishta later described how worshipping a form with attributes would lead to the worship of an entity without attributes, which in turn would lead to pure Knowledge. Pure Knowledge would help one to experience the unchanging Self.

After an elegant narration through several tasteful stories about the methods a seeker could adopt, Sage Vasishta finally took up a discussion of the phenomenal world, an illusion (*māya*) that every seeker would like to cross through the different methods of practice.

The story of Sage Gādhi is central to this discussion and happens to be the primary focus of the current chapter. Sage Gādhi went into a stupor for a brief while during his bath in a pond. During that swoon he dreamed that he was born as a tribal, became a king in the later part of his life and ruled over a vast empire, and finally committed suicide under unavoidable circumstances by jumping into funeral pyre. He saw 80 years of his life during that trance, though he might not have fainted for more than a handful of minutes in the pond! He was surprised how he could witness 80 years of dream life within those few minutes. However, he did not pay much attention to it, as it was merely a fantasy. He resumed his normal routine life.

But then, beyond all his expectations, Gādhi happened to notice his dream kingdom and country in the real world. Every one in that kingdom attested the fact that a tribal king ruled the land until recently and the king committed suicide. Gādhi could not make any sense of his dreamland appearing now in real life. Nor could he understand how real people were able to provide evidence of what he saw in his fantasy. He thought over the matter considerably. Unable to comprehend the meaning of it all, he prayed to Lord Vishnu.

Lord Vishnu appeared before Gādhi. The Lord explained the mental processes of perception ('**रुपालोक काल**' '*rūpāloka kāla*') , anticipation ('**मनस्कर काल**' '*manaskara kāla*') and remembrance ('**तत्ताकाल**' '*tattākāla*') in terms of Present, Future and Past Time Periods. Spicing up His talk with intricate logic, He established that everything that Gādhi had done was entirely imaginary – whether it was the dream of himself being the king or his personal visit to that kingdom in his so-called wakeful state.

Gādhi could not believe his ears. So he went back to that kingdom on a second visit. He was bewildered to see physically once again everything that he witnessed in his dream. Unable to understand how things could physically appear a second time if it was merely a dream, he prayed to Lord Vishnu again. Lord Vishnu said that it was possible for several people to witness the same dream together. The Lord told Gādhi that he and the people of Kīra kingdom were experiencing the same hallucination simultaneously. Thus speaking, he disappeared.

Unable to grasp the issues, Sage Gādhi resumed deep meditation. Lord Vishnu appeared before him once again. Lord Vishnu indicated this time that past events could appear as current on-going events for a person suffering from hallucinations. He further told Gādhi that Gādhi's mind remembered the story of a tribal individual. It (his mind) did not stop there. It identified Gādhi's personality with the tribal. Even though Gādhi was intellectually convinced of this fact, an experiential understanding was missing. Lord Vishnu observed that it was the very nature of the deceitful mind. So the Lord exhorted Gādhi to perform austerities and purify his mind to be able to grasp the Truth. Accordingly, Sage Gādhi went into deep meditation, overcame the illusory phenomena and realized Self.

Thus ended the life-story of Gādhi in brief. We may recall that two worlds –one real and the other virtual – appeared to an individual in one of the stories (The Story of Leela) in the Chapter on Creation. In that chapter, there was also the story of King Lavana witnessing in real life the very same world he saw in dream. In the next Chapter on Sustenance, we were told in the story of Bhargava that Sukra burnt his own body. Gādhi's story is an amalgamation of these three stories.

Sage Vasishta attributed the ability of Queen Leela to see a real and a reflected imaginary world to the power of a boon granted by Goddess Saraswati. He called it a trick of the magician dispatched by Indra when King Lavana happened to witness in a dream an actual event that had taken place in a forest. The events described in the story of Bhargava were credited to the austerities performed by himself. Yet, Lord Vishnu appeared three times in Gādhi's story and gave three different reasons for what happened to Gādhi. The Lord initially emphasized that not only Gādhi becoming a king as a tribal, but his actual visits later on to the kingdom were also parts of the same dream. Second time around, Lord Vishnu said that Gādhi and the people of Kīra kingdom had the identical fanciful visions simultaneously.

During His third appearance, the Lord indicated that a past event that had had occurred elsewhere had infected Gādhi's mind as a meme due to the deceitful nature of mind. He advised him to perform strict austerities to purify his mind.

Gādhi being a pious and austere person did not doubt Lord Vishnu nor did he feel that the Lord was shifting His stand each time. Gādhi tried his best to understand the message given by Vishnu. Gādhi was not aided by any special powers due to Saraswati or Indra as was the case in the earlier stories. Gādhi was an ordinary seeker like any one of us. A seeker has to understand what illusion (*māya)* is. Sage Vasishta wanted to convey that intelligence necessary in comprehending illusory phenomena could not be obtained by any boons. Therefore, he invoked Lord Vishnu repeatedly in the story and made him say that deep meditation should be practiced not for attainment of special boons but for purification of the mind, in order to disinfect the mind of all memes.

Gādhi could see the purport of Lord Vishnu's responses due to his austerities and meditation. Normally we believe that wakeful part of our life as reality and the part that goes in dreams as untrue. We are unable to experience Truth because such a belief is unfounded. That is why Sage Vasishta made Lord Vishnu to explain to Gādhi in these words: "The entire lot of your experiences, including your visit to the kingdom of the tribal king is a mere phantasm." But Gādhi could not immediately grasp the significance of this statement. So Lord Vishnu conveyed the same message in different words a second time: "You as well as the people of the tribal kingdom are conceiving the world as reality. This is a fantasy everybody has been collectively experiencing. Please understand that every experience in the world is imaginary!"

Still, Gādhi could not make any sense of it. The Lord explained for the third time around with the words: "The root cause for illusion lies in the fact that you think that your body is yourself, though you are different from your body. Because of this you considered yourself as the tribal king, though you were not." Gādhi felt he could understand intellectually but not experientially. He was in a confused state. The Lord suggested that Gādhi should purify his mind to come out of the befuddled state.

Though Gādhi's story is thus seemingly a bit of a repetition, Sage Vasishta skillfully presented an amalgamation of the message from the earlier three stories – Leela, Lavana and Bhargava Upakhyanas. Sage Vasishta establishes through the story that our so-called daily world is such a phantasm. Using an ordinary person devoid of any special powers viz. Gādhi as the lead character, conveys that it is applicable to every normal human being like us. He named the characters in these stories too befittingly as was in the main part of the text.

The focus of the Chapter on The Calm Down is Gādhi's story from which it emerges that performance of austerities and deep meditation are the only cure for the disease of illusion. Sage Vasishta indicated further that dissolving the mind was true meditation. He described exhaustively the method of meditation on AUM through Uddālaka's story as a means to achieving this. He clarified what was meant by the state of "Common Beingness (*satta sāmānya*)."

Later it was debated whether a person attained the state of Common Beingness would be action-centered or meditation-centered. It was resolved that it was immaterial as established through the story of the kings, Suraghu and Parighu.

The story of Bhāsa and Vilāsa was narrated to prove that it was necessary to have a high degree of determination to conquer mind through mind. Sage Vasishta provided an exhaustive account of mind, its nature and quality. He talked of the Paths of Knowledge and Yoga for conquering the mind. He described fourteen methods under Yoga approach in order to arrest the mind by controlling breath.

The story of Vitahavya was told to illustrate the Path of Knowledge. The unreal nature of time and space were discussed and he established that the phenomenal world was a dream within a dream, an imagination within an imagination and therefore could not be true. He also clarified that the Annulment of mind was of two types –Annulment With Retention of Form and Annulment Without Retention of Form. Jivanmuktas are of the first type and Videhamuktas are of the second type.

Next Sage Vasishta took up an explanation of the seeding of the phenomenal world. Self analysis, breath control and ridding oneself of past impressions were the steps to be followed for attaining complete quiescence of the mind, as taught by Vasishta.

Here ends the Chapter on The Calm Down.

[It is clear from the above brief presentation that the first two Chapters of Yoga Vasishta were of an introductory nature. They discuss Renunciation and the Attitude of a Seeker respectively. The third and fourth Chapters, viz. on Creation and Sustenance deal with the theoretical underpinning of the subject matter, Philosophical wisdom. The current Chapter on The Calm Down detailed the practical methods of nulling the mind. These five chapters constitute 17,500 verses. It gives the feel that what all has to be taught, has already been completed. But there is one more Chapter of a size almost equivalent to all the five preceding chapters lying ahead. What is still left out to be discussed in the remaining 14,500 verses? What is taught by the venerable sage in the final Chapter on Nirvana? Let us now take up the next chapter to find out.]

40. WORD GLOSSARY

Word meaning as used in the text :

adhistāna	Substratum.
adhyāropa	Superimposition.
aham	The sense of I, Embodied self,
ahamkāra	I-sense, I-consciousness, ego.
aniyata	Unregulated
antahkarana	It is a combination of four types of intellectual activities called *Manas, Buddhi, Chitta*, and *ahamkāra*.

antassanga	(*Sanga*) Forgetting the 'self' is actually Infinite Self and craving for worldly pleasures. The word *sanga* is defined in several other approaches too.
ātma	Individual self. The word atma without any prefix denotes a *jīva or jīvatma.*
avidya	Nescience; Ignorance about the Ultimate truth of Self of an individual. *māya* and *avidya* are sometimes used synonymously.
bīja	Seed, generally implies root cause. Sometimes it is used to indicate tiny things. *bīja askhara* (seed letter) refers to a letter that represents a very deep and elaborate meaning and spiritual significance.
brahma	The personification of the Creator.
brahma randhra	The vertex of the skull. It is said that there is a fine hole at the vertex and the *suśumna nādi* passes up through this hole to connect the individual to the *brahma loka* through Solar rays. *brahma randhra* is the center of the seventh *chakra* (*sahasrāra*) which corresponds with the Pineal plexus.
brahman	*brih* means to expand, spread all over. It stands for the primordial undifferentiated changeless, limitless and everlasting, nameless substance that forms the substratum for the world. The *Advaiti*c view is that *brahman* is the Universal Self, the Absolute that appears as the world. *Parabrahman* is also used sometimes. The word *brahman* ending with 'n' is used to mean the Universal Self while the word brahma ending with 'a' is used to mean the creator. *brāhmana* etymologically means one who is knowledgeable of *brahman*. In common usage *brāhman* denotes a social class/caste.
buddhi	A part of *antahkarana* which is associated with decision-making faculty. In general literature this word sometimes indicates intellect.
chaitanya	Consciousness.
chit	Same as *chaitanya*
chitta	A part of *antahkarana* associated with recapitulative faculty. In literature the words manas, buddhi and chitta are used to denote mind in general.

chitta satta	(*sārūpa manonāsa* Annulment of mind is of two types. When the mind is annulled with its form retained, it is called *sārūpa manonāsa* or *chitta satta*. When the form also is eliminated, then it is *arūpa manonāsa* which is none other than *videhamukti*.
drik	The name of the Seer when there is nothing to be seen; Used for the *Brahman* state.
driśya	The object seen, perceived.
gunās	Refers to *sattva, rajas and tamas* - These three are the fundamental qualities or tendencies that underlie all manifestations.
Hiranyagarbha	Literally means "One with a Golden Womb." Represents the unmanifested cosmic mind and the creator.
jīva or jīvatma	Individual self, embodied person.
jīvanmukta	One who realized that his self and the Supreme Self are One when he is still living.
jnāna samādhi	Knowledge-based Deep Meditation
jnāni	One who realized Self
kalpa	Period equivalent to 4.32 billion earth years. A span of 4.32 million years forms a set of Four *Yugas.* A thousand of such sets of Four *Yugas* make one day time of *Brahman. Brahman* has an equally long night time. A day of *Brahma* is called a *Kalpa.*
karma	Action. Also refers loosely to the effects of action. Karma is of three types viz. agami, sanchita and *prārabdha*. The accumulation of the effects of all actions of the countless past births is called sanchita karma. Out of the sanchita karma, a small portion is segregated to be enjoyed during the present life. This specific portion is called *prārabdha*. The part of sanchita which is going to give us future births is *āgami karma*.
kartritva	Doership, owning the responsibility for doing an action.
linga śarīra	(*sūkśma śarīra*) Subtle body which consists of five sense organs, the five action organs, the subtle five elements, *antahkarana and prāna*

lambika yoga	A process of *Hatha Yoga* wherein the nerve under the tongue is cut so that the tongue can be folded back to press up the uvula and receive the drops of nectar from *sahasrāra*.
mahat	Intellectual principle as source of *ahamkāra* (I-consciousness).
manas	A part of *antahkarana* that is associated with thoughts and counter thoughts. Sometimes the word manas is used loosely to denote *antahkarana*.
manvantara	Equivalent to 71sets of Four *Yugas*.
māya	Illusion. The veiling and projecting power of Brahman. It is like an operator "+". It does not associate with operands. Nor does it itself undergo any change. But it brings out an illusory change. E.g. *Brahman* + Thought is Hiranyagarba. For a detailed explanation refer to p: 5 of Part II of our Series on Yoga Vasishta.
mithya	One which is neither existent nor non-existent (apparition).
nirguna	Devoid of the three Gunas
niyata	Regulated
niyati	Law of Nature. In this text this word is used to denote the natural principles of the universe which are guided and determined by the thought process of the supreme creator, Hiranyagarbha.
pancha bhūtas	The existence of an object in creation can be established only by experience. An object can be experienced only through the sense organs which are five in number. Each of the sense organs can detect only one attribute of the object and hence what constitutes the creation can be correspondingly five fundamental properties. Accordingly there are five fundamental elements. These are earth, water, fire, wind and space.
para or parama	Higher, Supreme, Other, not belonging to this world.
parabrahman	See Brahman.
pāramārthika	*pāramārtha* means the Ultimate or the Supreme.That which is related to *pāramārtha* is *pāramārthika*.

paramatma	Supreme Self, Universal Brahman.
prārabdha	See *Karma*.
prakriti	Nature. Primal substance from which all things are created. According to the *Sankhya* System there are two ultimate fundamentals of truth in the universe. They are *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. *Purusha* is the one with consciousness but actionless. *Prakriti* also known as *pradhana* is inert but it is the creator of the universe. *Prakriti* has three intrinsic parts called *trigunās* i.e. *sattva, rajas and tamas*.
pralaya	Complete merging, dissolution. *pralaya* = Dissolution (with capital "D") that comes at the end of one cycle of creation. End of Kalpa.
pratyabhijna	Re-cognition after a lapse.
rajas	The second of the three *gunās*. It signifies activity, energy, motion, desire, anger etc.
sādhak	Seeker on a spiritual path.
sādhana sampatti	(i) *nitya anitya vastu viveka*, (Discrimination of the permanent and impermanent objects of the world). (ii) *iha amutra phala bhoga virāga* (Renunciation of the worldly desires or desires pertaining to heaven). (iii) *samādi śatka sampatti* (the six qualities like control of internal organs, external organs etc.) (iv) *mumukśtva* (Incessant desire for Liberation)
sadrūpi	In the form of *sat*, Pure Existence.
saguna	Associated with the three gunas, attributes.
sama	Control of internal organs.
samādhi	Thoughtless state of meditation. It is divided into many subtypes such as: (i) *sabīja samādhi* - a *samādhi* wherein the sacred sounds of hymns like om are concentrated upon. (ii) *nirbīja samādhi* – a *samādhi* where no sounds or thoughts are allowed to remain.

	(iii) *savikalpa samādhi* – a *samādhi* where contemplation on the Supreme Self continues like an unbroken stream of oil. (iv) *nirvikalpa samādhi* – a *samādhi* where the aspirant's consciousness stays dissolved in the Supreme Self with an experience of total Oneness.
samsāra	State of Bondage. Also refers to the cycle of births and deaths, the visible world and the universe, which is considered to be a phantasmagoria.
sankalpa	Thoughts. Also sometimes intentions.
sankalpa vikalpa	Thoughts and counter thoughts.
sanskārās	Innate tendencies. Impressions of past actions carried in the mind.
sat	Pure existence; beingness
sarga	A sub-chapter.
satta sāmanya	Common beingness. For details see subheading 24
sattva (satva)	The first of the three gunas. It signifies qualities like goodness, softness, wisdom and the like.
sloka	A verse or stanza
sphurana	A flash.
sthiti	Sustenance is the process of sustaining something (i.e. providing support physically or mentally). Some texts translate *sthiti* to mean maintenance (to cause something to continue in the same state or level). Other translations for *sthiti* are: being; existing; subsistence (to maintain oneself at the minimum level); and state. The word 'state' is commonly used for states of matter (e.g. : water, ice and steam). Existence or beingness is more appropriately used to represent the word 'sat.' Hence we preferred here the word "sustenance" for Sthiti as more proximal to the connotation in Yoga Vasishta.
swasvarupa	One's own original form – refers to the Supreme Self.
tamas	The third of the three gunas. It signifies lethargy, inertia, lust, cruelty and the like.

tapas	Austerity, meditation
tapasvi	Ascetic; one who practices austerities.
triputi	Triad of the observer-observed-observing and the like.
turīya	The fourth state which is distinct from wakeful, dream and deep sleep states and exists pervading all the states.
turīyatīta	The state beyond *turīya*, generally corresponds to videhakaivalya.
upādhi	Limiting adjunct. Also body.
upasama	The calming down, annulment, quietitude or annihilation
utpatti	Creation, origination.
vāsanās	Impressions. Represent the influences from actions of past births.
videhamukti	Liberation without body.
vritti	Thought-wave, a modification in the mind.
vyavahāra	Mundane, worldly, transactional
yuga	See *Kalpa.*

The definitions of the words in this Glossary are compiled from several sources. We are grateful to all the original sources.